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Wednesday, 20 September 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Karzai: Every year our gathering under this roof does homage to the foresight of our predecessors, who, by founding the United Nations, envisioned the unity of nations. Today, this Assembly embodies that vision: the vision of our interdependence as members of a single community of nations. This vision has a strong resonance in Afghanistan, where both our past troubles and our recent accomplishments are, in large part, related to the outside world.

When I last addressed the Assembly in 2004 I spoke about the tremendous progress that Afghanistan had achieved since 2001. Today that story of success continues. Over the past two years we have taken further significant steps forward, attaining all the milestones in Afghanistan's post-war transition. Millions of Afghans have participated in two general elections, one for the president and another for the parliament. With the inauguration of our National Assembly last year all three independent branches of a democratic state were completed. We have continued to build schools and clinics and create employment opportunities for our people. Our trade with the region and beyond is growing very rapidly. Industrial activity is gradually taking root. As a result, Afghanistan's income per capita has doubled since 2002.

At the London Conference earlier this year our Government presented Afghanistan's National Development Strategy for the next five years, which the international community endorsed. Afghanistan and its international partners also entered into a compact, the Afghanistan Compact, which provides the framework for continued international cooperation in Afghanistan. Under the compact we Afghans committed to continue to work towards a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, with good governance and human rights protection for all under the rule of law. In return, the international community pledged continued and long-term political, military and financial assistance.

Regrettably, it is not all positive news that I have to share today. Over the past year our efforts to build Afghanistan into a stable, prosperous and democratic polity have also encountered setbacks. We have seen terrorism rebounding as terrorists have infiltrated our borders to step up their murderous campaign against our people. Terrorism sees in the prosperity of the

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Afghan people its ultimate defeat. That is why our schools and clinics get burned down, and our *ulema*, our teachers and our doctors get killed. That is why today 200,000 of our students who went to school a year ago are no longer able to do so.

It is also sobering to know that polio, the children's disease, increased from only four cases in 2005 to 27 this year. All those cases occurred in some areas of southern Afghanistan where terrorists are preventing children's access to vaccination and health care.

Terrorists are prepared to cross any boundary and commit horrific acts of violence to try to derail Afghanistan from its path to success. They want the international community to fail in its collective endeavour to help Afghanistan to rebuild. That is why they decapitate elderly women, blow up mosques full of worshippers and kill schoolchildren in indiscriminate bombings of civilian areas. That is why they are killing international soldiers and civilians who have come to Afghanistan to help the Afghan people, such as the four Canadian soldiers who were killed four days ago while distributing notebooks and candies to children in a village in Kandahar, or the Turkish engineer who was building roads in Helmand. Clearly, unless we confront them more decisively, terrorists will continue to take lives and inflict greater damage.

To be sure, terrorism does not emanate from within Afghanistan; Afghanistan is its worst victim. Military action in Afghanistan alone, therefore, will not deliver our shared goal of eliminating terrorism. We must look beyond Afghanistan to the sources of terrorism. We must destroy terrorist sanctuaries beyond Afghanistan, dismantle the elaborate networks in the region that recruit, indoctrinate, train, finance, arm and deploy terrorists. We must ensure that political currents and entities in the region are not allowed to use extremism as an instrument of policy.

Fighting terrorism effectively is also tied to our fight against narcotics. The menace of narcotics feeds terrorism and threatens the foundation of legitimate economic development in Afghanistan and also, of course, in the region.

A combination of factors — mainly the lack of a security environment conducive to our counter-narcotics efforts, the absence of a comprehensive alternative livelihoods programme and clandestine credit flows to poppy farmers — is behind the narcotics trade. Afghanistan is committed to fighting narcotics, alongside terrorism, with strength and determination and through a combination of law enforcement and economic measures. We expect that the international community will continue to support us in this fight by enabling us to provide meaningful alternative livelihoods to our farmers.

In the context of the United Nations role in enhancing global security we endorse the recommendations of the Secretary-General for a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy and welcome the recent adoption of the strategy by the General Assembly.

We also express our support for the proposal to convene a high-level conference on international terrorism with a view to concluding the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism at the earliest possible opportunity.

Afghanistan also attaches great importance to the various initiatives undertaken to promote understanding and cooperation among civilizations. Afghanistan stands ready to contribute to further enriching these initiatives with our knowledge and experience of international cooperation and interdependence.

Meanwhile, we remain deeply concerned at the increased incidence of Islamophobia in the West. This trend does not bode well for the cause of building understanding and cooperation across civilizations. As a Muslim nation, Afghanistan is committed not only to safeguarding the interest of our Holy Faith but also to building bridges of understanding and friendship among followers of all faiths.

The situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, remains a source of great concern to us in Afghanistan. Afghanistan strongly supports the full realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to sovereignty and an independent State of Palestine living side by side in peace and coexistence with the State of Israel. Afghanistan also shares the pain of the people of Lebanon as they suffer a terrible relapse into destruction caused by war. We hope that the international community will step in with concern and generosity to address Lebanon's needs so that it may recover.

To conclude, I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his exemplary leadership in serving the cause of global security and prosperity. I thank him especially for his interest in and commitment to Afghanistan and for his contribution to making our world a more secure place.

I also thank the members of the international community for their steadfast and generous support for Afghanistan over the past five years. I convey the gratitude of the Afghan people for the sacrifices that the men and women in uniform from about 40 countries throughout the world have made in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. We will honour those sacrifices by remaining true to our vision of building a secure, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan that will contribute to the progress of our region and to the security of the world at large.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for his statement.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Torrijos *(spoke in Spanish)*: I should like to say how pleased the Government of Panama is at your election, Madam, to preside over the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. Your illustrious professional record and your extraordinary action in defence of women's rights lead us to believe that you will guide us in an exemplary manner. I also congratulate the Secretary-General on his encouraging words yesterday. The ovation that ensued bears witness to the Assembly's gratitude for his efforts over 10 years of heading the Secretariat.

Over the past few years we have dedicated considerable effort and time to the task of reforming the United Nations. We are doing this for one simple reason: we want it to work better. That aspiration is based on a profound conviction that the Organization is indispensable for humanity. Those who criticize the Organization must be honest when they wonder what the world would be like without the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Those who govern are examined on a daily basis by their peoples and sometimes they are criticized very severely, but nobody suggests that there should not be a government. We want governments to be better because they are necessary, just as we want the United Nations to be better because it is equally necessary. We do not want to imagine a world without a United Nations. That is why at the Summit in September last year, as the culmination of long debate and tremendous collective effort, we agreed on a series of reforms for the United Nations machinery.

What is at stake today is not just the fate of a single initiative, but, rather, the effectiveness of the United Nations in complying with the purposes and principles of the Charter. The General Assembly has acted with diligence, and we are proud in particular of the decision to create a Human Rights Council, whose establishment should strengthen respect for human rights and spread their promotion globally. Panama, born closely linked to international affairs, continues to be committed to strengthening human rights throughout the world. It is in this field that we see the greatest paradox: where the United Nations has made the most progress is where there remains the most progress still to be made. Before its inception human rights violations were almost ignored. Today the denunciations made at the United Nations have a tremendous deterrent power, so those violations do not continue to be perpetrated. At the same time, it is true that there have been horrendous violations during the life of the United Nations, but no one can deny that the reality and consequences are very different from the situation that prevailed only a few decades ago.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies have the important task of coordinating efforts to protect the millions of human beings living in poverty. Poverty is the daily denial of man's fundamental rights. While genocide causes indignation and is emphatically rejected by the international community, there should be the same indignation over poverty, as it afflicts a

large part of the world's population. Governments have a moral obligation to help people and communities living below the poverty line. Economic growth rates are deceptive, and almost offensive, if there is no direct relief for those who have less and who, without assistance, have no chance of breaking out of the vicious circle of poverty.

Within the reforms to the Organization now being debated, we should, in order more effectively to address poverty in the world, give greater weight and authority to the General Assembly to adopt measures of universal scope, not resolutions, repeated year after year, with no binding power.

Similarly, I should like to address the need to expand the Security Council so that it truly represents today's world and not the world as it was 60 years ago. Not to reform the Security Council would be detrimental to its purposes. A Council that is not representative cannot be as legitimate or effective. However, although there is consensus about the need to reform, how to reform has provoked more disunity than agreement. From Panama's perspective, geographical representation is an important factor to be considered, but it cannot be the only one. A member of the Security Council does not sit on the Council to represent itself or the geographic region to which it belongs; it represents all Member States, which have entrusted it with this responsibility because it has shown the commitment and capacity to further the effort to maintain international peace and security.

It is time now to look at this topic with different eyes. The facts that are developing continuously in the Middle East, and the fact that terrorist attacks continue to occur throughout the world, show that it is crucial to strengthen the Security Council as soon as possible through a process of reform that includes a moderate expansion of the membership while the Council remains legitimate in the eyes of the rest of the international community. Strengthening the organs of the United Nations, and more particularly the Security Council, will make it possible for events such as those in Lebanon to be met with a prompt and effective response. If the Organization had had the required instruments to act robustly with legitimacy, we could have put an early end to the confrontations; in fact, they could have been avoided entirely if we had had an adequate preventive force. The rapid escalation of the conflict has highlighted the imperative need to resolve the Middle East crisis so that Jews, Muslims and Christians can coexist in peace, as they do in Panama and many other parts of the world.

There are tested ways to promote confidence among parties, to reconcile positions and to achieve consensus. The use of arms can help some people to gain some short-term objectives but the atmosphere is poisoned and there cannot be peaceful coexistence among neighbours, families and peoples that geography has placed so close to one another. It is obvious from every perspective that a solution to the conflict requires the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories, establishment of the Palestine State and recognition of Israel's right to exist as a State. All the countries in the region must have sufficient guarantees that conflicts will not be resolved through force and that no territory can be used to attack a neighbour. Peace in the Middle East has to be built by each and every State with the resolute support of the international community.

Our vision is the same for other regions of the world where a high degree of political tension still prevails and endangers the peace. Peaceful solutions cannot be postponed, for there is always the risk of violent confrontations of unsuspected dimensions that we will all deplore.

I should like to draw attention to a significant event that will take place in my country in the next few weeks and will have an impact on world trade. On 22 October there will be a referendum to decide whether the Panama Canal should be expanded. The historic and emotional dimension of the canal for the Panamanian people means that its expansion is the only decision of the legislature and the Executive that needs a referendum for confirmation. The Panama Canal links the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. It is therefore the best route for the transport of goods between different continents, between two countries in the American continent, and even between two coasts in a single country. Five per cent of world maritime trade passes through the Panama Canal. The percentage varies from one country to another: 3.5 per cent of an economy the size of China's; 16 per cent of the United States foreign trade; and 35 per cent of Chile's trade. The fact is that the future of the Panama Canal affects the international community as a whole.

Only seven years ago the canal was run by the United States. After a long and complex negotiation that included a special meeting of the Security Council

in Panama — one of only two times that that body has met outside New York Headquarters — it reverted to Panama on the last day of the twentieth century. Since then Panama has administered the canal with efficiency and safety, and it is now about to decide whether to take the tremendous step of expanding the canal to enhance its capacity and allow larger ships to use it.

The United Nations has always been involved in Panama's fate, the fate of the canal. It was on the agenda when it was a continuing source of conflict between Panama and the United States. It supported the Universal Congress on the canal in 1997 and finally it welcomed the canal's orderly transfer to Panamanian jurisdiction. That is why Panama once again wishes to draw the General Assembly's attention to the canal and to reiterate its gratitude to the Non-Aligned Movement, because last week the Heads of State and Government adopted a declaration recognizing the efficient administration of the Panama Canal and expressing their support for the initiative to expand its present capacity. The canal is the most important resource for my country's development and is a valuable strategic avenue at the service of trade and communications for the entire world.

In my country there is full awareness that our geographic position is our major asset, but that its exploitation involves responsibilities towards the international community. That is why, while we welcome international recognition of the manner in which we have been administering the canal, we also wish to tell the world body that the Panama Canal will continue to be managed so as to be efficient, neutral and safe, for the benefit of all ships in the world, flying every flag.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chile.

Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Bachelet Jeria (*spoke in Spanish*): I come before the General Assembly as the first woman to be elected President of Chile, a country that has learned from its history.

We Chileans are living through difficult times; the Assembly knows this. The learning curve was difficult but productive. From pain hope was born. Major dissent gave way to major consensus. I come from a country where today the rule of law prevails, where the rights of persons are respected and promoted. It is a democracy that is experiencing economic growth, which in the past 16 years has helped millions of Chileans out of poverty. Chile stands with its region and looks at the world. My presence here today is a symbol of that Chile, a Chile that is unafraid to look back at the past and is united in building its own future. We can say with pride that today Chile is more free and more fair. As a society we have granted every citizen the basic dignity and respect that he or she deserves.

The world looks different from the far distant south, and that is the viewpoint my country wishes to bring here, a viewpoint that is optimistic about the opportunities of globalization but cautious about its risks. We can and must steer the course of the planet. Humans cannot and must not avoid being the instruments of their own advancement.

We wish to reaffirm our commitment to international law and institutions. Only through them shall we be able to build the fairer and more integrated world of which we dream, where large and small coexist in peace and harmony. The United Nations is a special instrument in this construction. A year ago we agreed on a programme for the reform of the Organization based on development, security and human rights. This has been called the millennium of hope. Let us make that hope a reality and do so from here, from this forum.

Development is a responsibility shared by all members of the international community, including the developed countries. Its attainment requires imagination and the political will to consolidate the world alliance endorsed by the Millennium Declaration. All this presupposes a more open, transparent and fair commercial and financial system. To our developed friends I say "Opening your markets to products from the south is a requirement of justice." That will represent a huge step forward towards the elimination of poverty. Let us therefore redouble our efforts to bring the Doha Round to a successful conclusion and make progress in integration processes at the regional level.

As an early supporter of the idea of President Lula of Brazil, Chile joined other countries in the initiative Action against Hunger and Poverty. We have introduced a solidarity tax of $2 on international airline tickets, and the funds produced will finance the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID) project, which will provide millions of quality drugs to people in developing countries suffering from malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS.

The most serious failure of the 2005 Summit was its silence on the multilateral disarmament agenda. Chile bases its multilateral foreign policy on the principle that collective security is indivisible. We all share a responsibility to preserve peace and international security. That is why Chile has joined in efforts to revitalize the disarmament agenda and move towards prohibition of the use of fissile material for military purposes.

The security of States is linked to the security of the human beings that make up those States, because it allows the exercise of freedom. Terrorism negates these freedoms and runs counter to the values that we share. Accordingly, we support the advance of United Nations reform in the area of counter-terrorism. Terrorism must be combated within democracy. Whenever we restrict constitutional guarantees and yield to the temptation to employ illegal methods to fight terrorism we are handing a victory to its proponents, because it is only then that they succeed in threatening the spirit of our democracy.

In a spirit of solidarity we are participating actively in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Chile will continue to support the Haitian people, and I appeal from this rostrum to all donor countries to provide the economic and financial assistance already pledged.

The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding achievements of the 2005 Summit. Chile has joined enthusiastically in the work of the Commission and will endeavour to ensure that its results live up to the hopes placed in it by nations.

My country deplores the serious crisis affecting the Middle East and strongly condemns any armed action targeting innocent civilians. Self-defence may be exercised only within the framework of proportionality and containment outlined in international humanitarian law. The delay in the Security Council's call for a ceasefire in Lebanon was also inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the Charter. The credibility of the Organization requires that all stakeholders do their duty without discrimination and without subordinating collective security to their individual interests.

Chile supports the deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with its expanded mandate, and will continue to respond to the appeal to meet urgent humanitarian needs in Lebanon and Palestine. We urge full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), which calls on the international community to cooperate in a full cessation of hostilities in the Middle East, the restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty over its territory and the guaranteeing of Israel's security.

The promotion and defence of human rights and democracy is the cornerstone of Chile's foreign policy. As I said at the outset, we have learned a great deal from our own history. Exactly 30 years ago the General Assembly received terrible news: Orlando Letelier, the former Foreign Minister and Defence Minister of President Allende, had been brutally murdered on the street in Washington D.C. Representatives were horrified by that crime and today I remember with emotion how we felt. I mention that to illustrate how we have learned the lessons of the past. Nothing justifies the violation of human rights. Chile rejects impunity.

I assure all members of our commitment and enthusiasm to participate in initiatives designed to promote human rights and democracy. We therefore welcome the launching of the United Nations Democracy Fund and the creation of the Human Rights

Council. We very much value the Council's adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The promotion of human rights does not contradict the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States. Chile has been, and will remain, in the front line in the defence of human rights.

The General Assembly must continue United Nations reform. It must revitalize itself, reform and expand the Security Council, reform the Economic and Social Council and modernize the management of the Secretariat and the administrative procedures of the Organization.

Allow me to reaffirm our hope in the United Nations. As a woman, a doctor and the political leader of a developing country, today I ask that we choose life, affirm justice, promote social justice and make this noble Organization the common and continuing response to our peoples' dreams of peace, development and dignity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chile for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajapaksa: On behalf of the Government and people of Sri Lanka I congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the high office of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am happy to note that a lady from a sister Asian country will guide us through the current session. As Sri Lanka was the first country in the modern world to elect a woman as Head of Government — Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike — your assumption of this high office is of special significance to us. To Mr. Jan Eliasson I convey our gratitude for the leadership he provided during the work of the sixtieth session.

In 1970, when I was first elected to the Parliament of Sri Lanka, a paragraph in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations gave substance and direction to my future political life. It was "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small". Having been a human rights campaigner at the grassroots level throughout my political life, I found it natural that my new Government should be committed to carrying the message of democracy to all corners of our multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious country. "Democracy, equity and prosperity" is our clarion call.

In addition, my country has been influenced by the core Buddhist values of non-violence, loving kindness, compassion, equanimity and mindfulness. With this sense of direction, our Government has committed itself "Towards a new Sri Lanka", guided by a vision of peace, where every Sri Lankan citizen may live with dignity and self-respect, in freedom and without fear, free of want, and where every child may enjoy childhood and grow up with hope and expectation.

However, Sri Lanka's dream is threatened by a terrible affliction that impedes development, undermines democracy and challenges fundamental freedoms. I refer to the bane of terrorism which confronts my country and many other countries of the world. I reaffirm my Government's firm commitment to supporting all global efforts to combat terrorism whenever and wherever it raises its ugly head. Terrorism has become closely intertwined with organized crime. It is now directly linked with people smuggling, the trade in illicit drugs, the illegal trade in small arms and money-laundering. Terrorism is a major impediment to development and poses a terrible challenge to civilized society. We support all measures undertaken in the United Nations to meet this challenge. We have ratified all United Nations conventions in this regard.

In our capacity as Chair of the ad hoc committee on measures to eliminate international terrorism we shall spare no effort to realize the international legal framework to facilitate our common struggle against terrorism. It is our fervent hope that the comprehensive convention on international terrorism will soon become a reality.

The illicit trade in and trafficking of small arms and light weapons has contributed to the escalation of many local conflicts because of the easy availability of arms for non-State actors. Sri Lanka is concerned that, despite the commitment of the international community to wipe out this menace, the impact at ground level throughout the world is limited. We hope that the United Nations Plan of Action on this matter will be fully implemented and its scope further expanded in the future.

With regard to terrorism, I speak from personal experience in my own country. Exploiting minority concerns, which we are addressing politically, a ruthless terrorist outfit in Sri Lanka, the LTTE, has been terrorizing our people for over two decades. In an age when the world seeks dialogue and peace, the LTTE devotes its full force to violence, suicide bombings, massacre of civilians, indiscriminate armed assaults and the conscription of young children for war. Assurances given to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on the conscription of children for armed combat have been blatantly violated.

At the presidential election in November last year people in certain parts of Sri Lanka were cruelly deprived of their freedom to vote. Furthermore, in an act of ethnic cleansing more than 60,000 Muslims were forcibly expelled from their homes in the north.

Our Government believes that some of the concerns of minorities in my country have deep roots. In this connection I recall the following words in the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

Soon after my election, despite the violence unleashed by the terrorists, I expressed the conviction that we needed to address the causes of the conflict from a fresh perspective and with a new approach to develop a sustainable solution. We examined this issue with an open mind, and looked at every option with a view to evolving a national consensus to achieve an honourable peace in an undivided country. A consultative process is currently under way to prepare constitutional proposals to address the concerns of the minorities. I have invited the LTTE to participate in the process of seeking a solution to the conflict through dialogue.

As one of the oldest democracies in Asia, we are firmly convinced that the restoration of democracy, the creation of space for dissent, and the promotion of human rights in the conflict-affected areas are essential elements of a successful and sustainable process of peace. I hope that the international community will continue to extend to us its fullest support towards the transformation of the LTTE into a democratic civilian organization.

Our Government firmly believes that terrorism cannot be eliminated through military means alone. We remain fully committed to talking with the LTTE, either directly or through a facilitator. It is our hope that the LTTE will transform itself from a terrorist outfit into one that is committed to dialogue and democracy. Our Government stands ready to respond to any display of good will and a move towards a non-violent approach.

We continue to take unilateral humanitarian measures, which extend even to terrorist cadres. As a responsible Government we will continue to provide unhindered access to conflict-affected areas to the International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations agencies and other recognized humanitarian agencies.

More than 53,000 Muslims were evicted from their homes by the terrorists following the recent violence. They are the innocent victims of the LTTE's ruthless policies. Following Government counter-measures, almost all have now returned to their homes. The Government has assumed responsibility to provide medical supplies, food and other essential items to the internally displaced persons living in the affected areas.

I am pleased to state that, despite the conflict in our country, the economy of Sri Lanka continues to grow at a commendable rate. In the first quarter of this year we recorded growth of 8.1 per cent — the highest in 28 years. With our determination to further enhance growth with equity, we have adopted an economic

strategy that will provide opportunities for all citizens, while giving adequate space to the private sector as the engine of growth.

We continue to maintain the highest rating in South Asia on the Human Development Index. We have already achieved some of the Millennium Development Goal targets in primary school enrolment, gender equality and maternal and infant mortality rates. We hope that the increased economic opportunities in the country will further encourage the LTTE to opt for a negotiated peace.

We follow a pro-poor development strategy, with a focus on regionally balanced growth. Our objective is to achieve overall development while raising the income levels of the poor through the empowerment of communities living at the grass-roots level. In this connection, Sri Lanka hopes that debt forgiveness will continue to be expanded to encourage the development of developing countries. It is only right that those who reach the heights of development should pause to lend a helping hand to those who have fallen behind due to circumstances.

I wish to acknowledge the role of President Clinton, the United Nations Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for their assistance with tsunami-related support. I also acknowledge the support given by many other countries. I am pleased to state that, despite being a developing country, we are now well on the way to recovery from this massive disaster, in many instances as a result of the efforts of our own people. We urge our development partners to stay involved with us in this long-term effort.

We in Sri Lanka see the United Nations as indispensable in creating a just and secure world order. We, the 192 Members of the United Nations, must continue to have faith in our collective capacity to reform the United Nations so that it is made more effective and more relevant to the needs of its Members in facing the challenges of the twenty-first century.

We are pleased with several important measures that have been adopted since the sixtieth session. Given my personal commitment to the promotion of human rights at both the local and international level, the establishment of the Human Rights Council, with enhanced status and capacity to promote and protect human rights worldwide, is a cause for delight. I am happy that Sri Lanka was elected to the Council last May. In honouring a pledge made during the presidential election last year, we have already started work on crafting a human rights charter in Sri Lanka. Consistent with our goal of safeguarding human rights, my Government will establish an international panel to observe investigations into certain alleged human rights violations that my Government has already condemned.

The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission is another important landmark achievement of the United Nations this year. We are pleased that Sri Lanka has been elected to its organizing Committee as a founder member of that important body. The needs and concerns of those affected, the specific theatres of conflict, and the realities on the ground of each specific situation must necessarily be taken into account in the Commission's work.

We are also encouraged by the general agreement that the Security Council must be strengthened, as it does not reflect current geopolitical realities. We therefore look forward to the continuation of work towards Security Council reform, towards making its composition more representative and its decision-making more democratic. It is essential that the Security Council reflect the current geopolitical realities in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

For long years now, on the basis of our commitment to human rights and dignity, we have had a lasting interest in seeing the emergence of peace in the Middle East. Recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people is of concern to me and to my country. Many Sri Lankans have in recent years made the Middle East their temporary home. We are pained by the recent escalation of violence in that region and the devastation in Lebanon. It is our sincere hope that Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) will pave the way for peace and security for Lebanon and the region.

The Preamble to the Charter requires that we "unite our strength to maintain international peace and security". Let us all, Members of the United Nations, focus sharply on this commitment. Let us dedicate ourselves to its realization and let us mobilize our collective energies towards the achievement of peace and security worldwide.

Let us make peace the goal of the present decade. Let us all unite for peace. May all living beings be free

of suffering, be healthy and be prosperous. May the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be with you all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chávez Frías (*spoke in Spanish*): First I very respectfully invite all those who have not done so to read the book that I am holding, one of the most recent by Noam Chomsky, who is among the most prestigious American and world intellectuals. The book, "Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance", is an excellent work to help us understand what happened in the world of the twentieth century and what is happening now, which is the greatest threat looming over our planet: the hegemonistic claims of American imperialism, which threaten the very survival of the human species. We continue to warn about this danger and to appeal to the people of the United States and the world to halt this threat, which is like the sword of Damocles hanging over our heads.

I had considered reading a chapter from the book, but to save time I shall confine myself to a recommendation. The book is very good, an easy read. I am sure, Madam President, that you are familiar with it. It is published in English, German, Russian and Arabic. The first people who should read it are our brothers and sisters in the United States, because the threat is in their own house. The Devil is there; the Devil himself is in the house.

The Devil came here yesterday, right here. It still smells of sulphur today. Yesterday on this rostrum the President of the United States, whom I refer to as the Devil, talked as if he owned the world. It would be appropriate to have a psychiatrist analyse yesterday's address by the President of the United States. As the spokesman of imperialism he came to share his prescriptions for preserving the current pattern of domination, exploitation and pillage of the peoples of the world. It was like an Alfred Hitchcock movie. I would even propose a title: "The Devil's Recipe".

As Chomsky says here clearly and in depth, American imperialism is doing all it can to consolidate its hegemonistic system of domination. We cannot allow it to do that. We cannot allow the establishment and consolidation of world dictatorship. The address of the world tyrant, cynical and full of hypocrisy, shows the imperialists' intention to control everything. They say that they want to impose a democratic model, but it is the democratic model of their own conception: the false democracy of elites, and furthermore an original democratic model imposed by bombs, bombardments and invasions. What a strange democracy! It would be necessary to revise the ideas of Aristotle and the other Greek pioneers of democracy in the face of this model, imposed by marines, invasions, aggression and bombs.

The President of the United States told us yesterday in this Hall, "everywhere you turn you hear extremists who tell you that you can escape your misery and retain your dignity through violence and terror and martyrdom." (*see A/61/PV.10*). Wherever he looks he sees extremists, and when he looks at your colour, my brother, he thinks "You are an extremist". Mr. Evo Morales Aima, the worthy President of Bolivia, looks like an extremist to him. The imperialists see extremists everywhere.

No, it is not that we are extremists. What is happening is that the world is waking up and people everywhere are rising up. I tell the world dictator "I have a feeling that the rest of your days will be a living nightmare, because everywhere you will see us rising up against American imperialism, demanding freedom, equality of peoples and respect for the sovereignty of nations." Yes, we may be described as extremists, but we are rising against the empire, against the model of domination.

The President also said, "I would like to speak directly to the people across the ... Middle East: my country desires peace." That is true. If we walk through the streets of the Bronx, New York, Washington, San Diego, California, San Antonio and San Francisco — anywhere in the United States — and speak to individual citizens, we shall find that the country does want peace. The difference is that the Government of the United States does not. It wants to impose its system of exploitation and pillage and its hegemony through war. If it wants peace, what is happening in Iraq? What happened in Lebanon and Palestine? What has happened over the past hundred years in Latin America and in world? Now there are new threats against Venezuela and Iran.

The President spoke to the people of Lebanon, saying "Many of you have seen your homes and communities caught in crossfire." What cynicism! What a capacity to lie shamelessly! Was it crossfire when bombs were dropped on Beirut with millimetric precision? He was thinking of a Western, where men shoot from the hip and somebody gets caught in the crossfire. This was imperialist fire, fascist fire, the fire of an assassin, the genocidal firing of the empire and Israel on the innocent people of Palestine and Lebanon. That is the truth.

Now it is said that we are suffering because we see homes destroyed. Early this morning I was looking at some statements in preparing my remarks, and I have brought with me a document in which I note that the President of the United States came to talk to the peoples. He said "To the people of Afghanistan", "To the people of Lebanon", "To the people of Iran". He addressed them all directly. One wonders what those peoples would tell him if they were given the opportunity. What would they have to say? I know what is in the soul of the peoples of the south, the oppressed peoples. They would say "Yankee imperialist, go home!" That would be the cry of the peoples of the world if they could speak with one voice to the American imperialists.

That is why last year when I came to this Hall, as I have been doing for the past eight years, I said something that has now been fully confirmed. Hardly anybody here can defend the United Nations system. Let us be honest and accept that the system born after the Second World War has collapsed. It is worthless. It is true that it serves to bring us together once a year to meet, make statements, prepare long documents, reflect and listen to good speeches like those yesterday by President Evo and President Lula and the ones we have just heard from the President of Sri Lanka and the President of Chile. But the Assembly has been turned into a merely deliberative organ, with no power to make any impact on the terrible situation in the world.

That is why Venezuela once again proposes here today, 20 September, that we re-establish the United Nations. Last year we made four modest proposals that we felt were crucially important for discussion by heads of State and Government, ambassadors and representatives.

The first — President Lula said this yesterday — is the expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council, with developed and under-developed countries of the third world as new permanent members. That is the first step.

Secondly, there must be effective methods to address and resolve world conflicts, with transparent debate and decision-making.

Thirdly, it is essential that, as everyone demands, there be an immediate end to the anti-democratic mechanism of the veto that is exercised when decisions are made in the Security Council. Let me give a recent example. The immoral veto of the United States, blocking a resolution, allowed the Israeli forces to destroy Lebanon with impunity before our very eyes.

Fourthly, as we have always said, the role and powers of the Secretary-General must be strengthened. Yesterday the Secretary-General practically gave us his farewell speech. He recognized that in the past 10 years serious world problems such as hunger, poverty, violence and human rights violations had worsened and become more complicated. That is a terrible consequence of the collapse of the United Nations system and American hegemonistic pretensions.

A few years ago Venezuela decided to wage this battle within the United Nations, recognizing the United Nations, as Members, and lending it our voice and our thinking. Our voice is an independent one representing dignity, the search for truth and the reformulation of the international system, with denunciation of persecution and of the aggression of hegemonistic forces against peoples of the planet.

That is how Venezuela, the homeland of Bolivar, came to put itself forward for a non-permanent seat on

the Security Council. The United States Government launched open, immoral aggression throughout the world to try to prevent Venezuela being freely elected to a seat on the Security Council. The empire is afraid of the truth, of independent voices. It calls us extremists, but it is the extremist.

I should like to thank all those countries that have announced their support for Venezuela even though the ballot is secret and there is no need to make an announcement. I believe that the open attack by the United States empire has increased the support of many countries, and that support strengthens the morale of Venezuela, our people and Government. Our brothers in the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), for example, have expressed their support as a bloc. With Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, as well as many other Latin American countries, such as Bolivia, Venezuela is now a full member of MERCOSUR. The Caribbean Community has expressed its support for Venezuela, as has the Arab League. I am immensely grateful to our Arab and Caribbean brothers. The African Union, almost all of Africa, has expressed support for Venezuela, as have countries such as Russia, China and many others.

On behalf of Venezuela and its people, and of the truth, I thank them all most warmly. With a seat on the Security Council, Venezuela will make not only its voice but that of the third world and all peoples heard throughout the world. We will defend dignity and truth.

Over and above all this, there are reasons to be optimistic — a poet would say "hopelessly optimistic". Beyond the threats, the bombs, the wars, aggression, preventive war and the destruction of entire peoples, we can see that a new era is dawning. As Silvio Rodriguez sings, "the era is giving birth to a heart". New trends are developing, alternative ways of thinking, alternative movements. Young people think differently. As has been shown in scarcely a decade, the idea of the end of history has been shown to be totally false, as has that of the Pax Americana and the establishment of the capitalist neo-liberal model, which creates poverty and is rejected.

Now we must define the future of the world. The dawn is breaking all over: Latin America, Africa, Europe and Oceania. I want to emphasize that optimistic vision, so that we may strengthen our will and our readiness to fight to save the world and build a new and better world.

Venezuela joins that struggle, and that is why we are threatened. The United States has already planned, financed and set in motion a coup in Venezuela, and it continues to support coup attempts and terrorism there. President Michelle Bachelet Jeria reminded us a short time ago of the horrendous assassination of the former Chilean Foreign Minister, Orlando Letelier. I would simply add that those who perpetrated that crime, in which an American citizen also died, are free. And they are Americans themselves, CIA terrorists.

We should also recall that in a few days there will be another anniversary: 30 years will have passed since another horrendous terrorist act, the destruction of an airliner of Cubana de Aviación in which 73 innocent people died. Where is the biggest terrorist of this continent, who masterminded the blowing up of the plane? He spent a few years in prison in Venezuela, but thanks to the CIA and Venezuelan Government officials at the time he was able to escape. Now he lives in the United States, protected by the Government. He confessed and was convicted of his crime, but the United States Government has double standards and protects terrorism when it wants to. I say this to make the point that Venezuela is fully committed to combating terrorism and violence, and joins those peoples that are fighting for peace and a world of equals.

I have just spoken of the Cuban airliner. Luis Posada Carriles is the name of the terrorist concerned. He is protected here, as are very corrupt people who have fled Venezuela. A group of terrorists bombed various embassies and assassinated people. During the attempted coup they kidnapped me and were going to shoot me. But God intervened, as did a group of loyal soldiers and the people, who took to the streets. So by a miracle I am here today. The leaders of that attempted coup and those terrorist acts are living in this country today, protected by the United States Government. I accuse the American Government of protecting terrorists and of holding a completely cynical discourse.

I mentioned Cuba. I was very recently in Havana for a few days, and I left it feeling happy because the birth of a new era could be seen. The Non-Aligned Movement summit adopted a historic final document. Do not worry; I shall not read it out. It contains a set of resolutions adopted after open and transparent debate. More than 50 heads of State attended, and Havana was the capital of the south for a week.

We have now relaunched the Non-Aligned Movement. If there is anything I could ask of all those here, my partners and brothers and sisters, it is that they lend their good will to strengthen the Non-Aligned Movement, which is important for the birth of the new era and the prevention of hegemony and imperialism. The Assembly will know that we elected President Fidel Castro Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement for the next three years, and we can trust him to lead us very efficiently. Those who hoped that Fidel would die were disappointed, and they will continue to be disappointed, because he is back in his olive-green fatigues and is now not only President of Cuba but Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. A very strong movement has been born: that of the South. We are men and women of the South.

With these documents, ideas, criticisms and reflections, I am now closing my file and taking the book with me. Do not forget that I recommend it very warmly and very humbly to all those present. I have tried to put forward ideas to save our planet, to save it from the imperialist threat. I hope that in this century, in the not too distant future, we shall see our children and grandchildren living better, in a world of peace based on the fundamental principles of the United Nations — a renewed and relocated United Nations. I believe that it must move to another country, to a city of the South. That is what we in Venezuela have proposed. The Assembly knows that my personal doctor and chief of security had to stay on a locked plane. Neither was allowed to come to the United Nations. This abuse we regard as a personal insult by the Devil. It smells of sulphur here, but God is with us, and I embrace you all. May God bless us all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for his statement.

Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gayoom (*spoke in Dhivehi; English text provided by the delegation*): The United Nations today is at a crossroads. It needs to become part of the twenty-first century, and it must do so with great urgency. It needs to gear itself to become an institution capable of taking on the serious challenges that confront the international community.

As we address these tasks, your election, Madam President, to preside over the sixty-first session of the General Assembly is a tribute to your wisdom and skill. It is also a compliment to your great country. I take this opportunity to congratulate you. At the same time, it gives me pleasure to express appreciation to Mr. Jan Eliasson, who presided so ably over the sixtieth session. Today, as the United Nations approaches the end of one era and the beginning of another, the Maldives expresses its profound appreciation to the outgoing Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. He has led the Organization for a decade, with great devotion and skill.

Modernization should be a top priority for any organization that wants to remain relevant in a time of rapid change. It is particularly important for the United Nations because of the central role that it must continue to play in promoting cooperation for international peace and security, economic and social development, human rights and the rule of law. The Maldives believes that reform of the United Nations must be transparent, balanced, comprehensive and inclusive.

In addition to modernizing the Security Council, we must strengthen the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. These reforms must make the Organization more action-oriented and democratic. A reformed United Nations must be responsive to the entire membership, and be faithful to its founding principles. The Organization must be adapted to carry out its mandate in full. There can be no doubt that this can be achieved by gearing the United Nations to implement all its mandates, decisions and resolutions without fear or favour.

The question of equitable representation and an increase in the membership of the Security Council is a

crucial part of the reform process. The Maldives believes the membership of the Council must reflect the realities of the present day. In this regard, the Maldives reiterates its support for the proposal of the group of four on Security Council reform.

For the Maldives the next few years will be a crucial period in our national development. As a result of national efforts made with the support of the international community, the Maldives is today set to say goodbye to its least developed country status. The three-year smooth transition period will begin in January 2008. Graduation from the least developed country list will pose numerous challenges to us.

However, we look forward to that event as a positive development. We have already begun work with the donor community to identify ways in which the economic and social progress of the country will continue without disruption after graduation. In this regard, I note the successful launching of the Maldives Partnership Forum as an annual event. The first such forum was held in June this year. I wish to thank our donors for their continued commitment to support the development of the Maldives beyond graduation.

The graduation of the Maldives from least developed country status to that of a developing country coincides with an important political phase in the country's development. Over the past three years we have been engaged in a major political transformation. These reforms are based on the sustained social and economic progress that has qualified the Maldives for graduation. The political reform programme that we began in 2003 covers institutionalizing political pluralism and strengthening human rights protection, media freedom and judicial reform.

The achievements of the programme to date include the formation of four political parties last year, strengthening the fundamental rights of the people and enhancing the rule of law. Also a constitutional assembly is in session to modernize the constitution. Other projects are being implemented to overhaul the criminal justice system, set up a modern police service, strengthen media freedom and develop civil society.

We are also determined to meet the standards prescribed in international human rights treaties. Over the past two years we have acceded to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol. We have also acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Just yesterday I deposited with the Secretary-General our instruments of accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol and to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Maldives was the country worst affected by the 2004 tsunami. Twenty-one months into the recovery programme, much has been achieved, but much remains to be done. I take this opportunity to thank the donor community and friendly countries for the support and assistance extended to our recovery programme. The biggest obstacle to the programme is the substantial funding shortfall in key aspects of recovery, in particular in the areas of repair and reconstruction of housing, transportation, water and sanitation, and environmental mitigation. The funding gap is estimated at $100 million. In addition, as a result of the impact of the tsunami and of high petroleum prices on public finances, there is a budget deficit of $100 million. At this critical juncture of our national progress I call upon our development partners, and the international community as a whole, to continue to assist the Maldives.

It is a matter of satisfaction to us that, despite the devastation caused by the tsunami and the short-term fiscal pressures, the Maldives has been able to meet some international development targets. In reducing poverty and in providing primary education the Maldives has already met the Millennium Development Goals. We are confident that we can attain the targets for health care and gender empowerment.

Instability in any part of the world has implications for the entire international community. One of the most intractable disputes of our time is the conflict in the Middle East, particularly the non-realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The recent hostilities in Lebanon and the sufferings of the Lebanese people have their roots in the Palestinian problem. The Palestinian issue must be resolved, in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The continued instability and violence in Afghanistan and Iraq is a matter of great concern to the Maldives. Years of instability and conflict have

ravaged the lives and society of the peoples of these countries.

The Maldives fully subscribes to the efforts made by the international community to combat terrorism. We are party to the major international conventions that have been formulated to defeat terrorism. Terrorism is an assault on the values of freedom and human solidarity. However, our efforts to combat the menace should avoid undermining the very values that we seek to protect. There is a resurgence of the vilification of Islam and Muslims. As the Maldives has been a 100 per cent Muslim nation for more than 850 years, we are dismayed by this trend. Islam has provided the basis for peace and social harmony in the Maldives. Islam preaches moderation, not extremism. Violence and killing are abhorrent to Islam. The Holy Koran states, "Take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law." (*The Holy Koran, VI:151*)

Needless to say, we are deeply pained and outraged by the negative imaging of Islam and the effort to associate fanaticism and violence with our peace-loving faith. The Holy Koran says, "Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion." (*ibid. XVI:90*)

Only love can conquer hatred. Knowledge alone can overcome prejudice. Tolerance can defeat fear. Stable peace requires inclusion. Effective and meaningful dialogue among civilizations and mutual respect among diverse peoples are necessary to address the challenges that we face today. Tolerance and respect for diversity are given a high value in Islam.

Civilization is under serious threat from the continued degradation of the environment and its resultant effects of global warming, climate change and sea-level rise. Small island States such as the Maldives and other low-lying regions of the world are in the front line of danger from rising seas. The extreme weather events of the past few years have been more frequent and destructive than ever before. They clearly demonstrate that the entire world is vulnerable to the devastation caused by climate change. The Kyoto Protocol has been a great disappointment. We call upon all countries to accelerate the adoption of urgent and realistic measures to stop climate change and sea-level rise.

If we are to address the vast array of challenges that humanity faces today we must effectively implement crucial blueprints and action programmes agreed through the multilateral process. We must breathe new life into Agenda 21. We must also adhere to the Monterrey Consensus. The Millennium Declaration must be followed up diligently. And, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said earlier this month, the United Nations must move from a culture of reaction to one of prevention.

Today I am speaking in my vernacular language, Dhivehi. It represents the legacy of several millenniums of continuous settlement and the culture that it has produced in the Maldives. Is not the protection of such legacies the touchstone of success of this global family of nations? If the United Nations can make small and vulnerable countries feel safe, then who will be facing any danger at all?

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Maldives for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Prodi (Italy) (*spoke in Italian. English text provided by the delegation*): I wish to offer you my congratulations, Madam President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Your experience in international affairs is the best guarantee of the success of your term. At the same time I express to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, our sincere thanks for his effective and

balanced leadership of the sixtieth session. My special appreciation goes also to Kofi Annan for having dedicated his life to the Organization, particularly in the past 10 years as Secretary-General, leading it through difficult challenges and laying the groundwork for its reform. Thank you, Kofi.

It was in this city on 11 September five years ago that the dramatic realization was forced upon us of just how dangerous the world has become. On that day we knew that the new millennium would hold unpredictable and complex threats extending beyond national borders; global threats against which notions of protection inside national borders are illusory; asymmetrical threats that are difficult to counter effectively with the instruments previously used to settle conflicts.

Terrorism and weapons of mass destruction have changed traditional society and its values. They have rendered obsolete systems of collective defence and security based on deterrence. The old solutions to the world's problems — the logic of balance and hegemony — are no longer enough to guarantee stability and security. These new threats add a new element to a list that includes regional conflicts in the Middle East, Asia and Africa; pandemics; problems of development and the gap between North and South; human rights abuses; mass migrations; and issues concerning energy and the environment. These are phenomena that it is also impossible to resolve without a collective assumption of responsibility.

If we wish to govern these phenomena we need to be equal to their dimensions. No country, however strong and powerful, can take on such complex challenges single-handedly. Global threats demand a global response. In the final analysis, this means collective partnership. To have chosen as the theme of the sixty-first session "Implementing a global partnership for development" was thus particularly appropriate. Without collective action by the countries in the northern and southern hemispheres, international organizations and institutions, the public and private sector and civil society, it will be impossible to achieve the goals we have set.

First and foremost we need to reinvigorate multilateralism, by which I mean above all restoring the central, fundamental role of the United Nations. The recent experience in Lebanon and the strengthening of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is one example of how the United Nations can regain its crucial importance in the resolution of international controversies. Above all, it demonstrates — and this is the key point — that if the stakeholders are willing to confer upon the United Nations a strong, central role, the Organization is well able to fulfil it.

In Lebanon we are still at square one, and much remains to be done. To underestimate the risk of this mission would be a serious mistake. We must, however, be pleased with how the United Nations, its Member States and — allow me to add — the European Union have addressed a situation that only two months ago risked getting out of hand, but which today presents a series of opportunities for the Middle East as a whole. We should be pleased to have set up a mission that represents the entire international community, a tangible expression of the very global partnership that we are discussing today. For, while it is true that Europe provides the backbone of UNIFIL, it cannot carry out its mission effectively without the contributions of China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Russia, Turkey and the many other non-European countries participating.

The question we must ask at this point is this: what do we need to do in order to continue the work just begun in Lebanon? More generally, in view of the crises and emergencies that surround us, what does the United Nations need in order to fulfil the principles of the Charter? It needs two things: first, quick completion of the reforms, and, secondly, the strong and unconditional support of its Members.

On the issue of reform, last year, after an intense series of negotiations, a moment of summary allowed us to lay the groundwork for giving the United Nations a more incisive role, to the benefit of the international community. The Peacebuilding Commission is the first major result, because it highlights the indestructible bond between development, security and human rights. A priority commitment to human rights and their safeguarding should be the goal of any country that wishes to lend greater ethical authority to its foreign policy. The results achieved by the reform on this point, through the establishment of the new Human Rights Council, are still being examined. The other significant outcome is the affirmation of the principle of the responsibility to protect, so that the international community will no longer be indifferent to acts of genocide.

But it is on the General Assembly and the Security Council that we must focus our attention, by restoring the central role of the General Assembly as the main decision-making, representative and policy-making body of the United Nations; and by renewing efforts to reform the Security Council, in terms both of its working methods and its composition. In the current situation Member States thus need to send a strong political signal that will help us to begin a new chapter and open the way to an innovative approach.

In other words, we need to enter a period of negotiation which has thus far eluded us, a period in which, rather than seeking to impose positions and models, we can undertake a true comparison of positions for the purpose of achieving solutions that are not divisive but, rather, enable the widest possible consensus. But a word of caution: everything is negotiable except for the ownership of the Organization by the Member States, by all of us, an ownership that represents the true pillar on which United Nations multilateralism must rest.

Another way for the United Nations to regain the forcefulness and credibility it needs to fulfil its mission is by strengthening the role of its great regional stakeholders. I am thinking first of the European Union, because if Europe is stronger the United Nations will be stronger. The world and the United Nations do not need a Europe that hesitates. Rather, they need a Europe that is able to play its part in meeting the challenges that await us. Europe, in turn, must become more aware that only by contributing to the resolution of global tensions can it give greater security and prosperity to its citizens.

The conditions for performing this role are there. The numbers alone make the European Union a global actor — 25 countries with a total population of more than 450 million, representing one fourth of the world's gross domestic product and every month allocating €500 million to third countries. Yet these numbers do not correspond to a comparable ability for the European Union to make a difference outside its own borders.

In the work of the Assembly and its various committees, the European Union is becoming a key actor. At every debate and on every resolution its position represents a point of reference in shaping the attitudes of the other regional groups. Our goal should be to acquire a similar ability within the Security Council. It may be a slow process, which will have to take into account points of resistance and stubborn legacies, but it should be pursued with determination. Only if Europe wields a more incisive influence on the issues of peace and security can it be considered a true global actor. The Balkan tragedies in the early 1990s were the result of an absent Europe. But when it is present, and when it is united, Europe can make the difference. That is what we are seeing in the Lebanese crisis. During the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, and in the course of its biennium in the Security Council, Italy will make a special effort to increase the commitment and role of the European Union at the United Nations.

Our aim is to make the Organization more effective in the areas and on the issues in which, by history and vocation, it can provide the most added value. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, has to be seen today in the context, above all, of the negotiation under way with Iran. But it is our duty to look further ahead and to strive, all together, to consolidate the general non-proliferation system. That principle will inspire the action of Italy when it enters the Security Council.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear file, we are ready to make our contribution to a negotiated solution that promotes regional security and stability.

In the Middle East, as I mentioned earlier, we need to seize our opportunities and openings , aware that there will be no peace until the Palestinian question has been resolved, with an independent, sovereign, vital and contiguous Palestinian state next to the state of Israel, and both within secure and internationally recognized borders.

That grave regional crisis should not lead us to forget Africa — long suffering, prey to ongoing crises, and even poorer than it was two decades ago. The situation in Darfur is critical. We cannot stand by and watch, for the simple reason that time has run out. We need to act quickly and strive for a gradual assumption of responsibility by the United Nations, in compliance with the decisions of the Security Council. The situation in the Horn of Africa is also a source of concern. Here a strong commitment is required from the Security Council, where, starting on 1 January 2007, Italy will make its contribution also, on the basis of its experience in the region. When I speak of Africa,

I mean primarily the gap between the northern and southern hemispheres, the phenomenon at the root of almost all the ills afflicting our era. It is that gap, above all, that causes the massive migratory flows that we cannot ignore and that we must address with realism, responsibility, equanimity, and especially solidarity.

In the Mediterranean we are working with our partners to address immigration on the basis of those principles, and seeking to facilitate legal flows and to counter both the illegal flows and the parties that profit from them, seeking to facilitate the integration into our countries of those who have immigrated legally, filled with hope and the desire to work.

But there is another dangerous gap that risks leaving an even deeper gash in the world. I am referring to what until a few years ago was called a clash of civilizations and religions between the Christian and Islamic worlds. I refuse to believe that such a clash exists. Extremists and fanatics do exist, but civilizations and religions were made for the sake of dialogue, exchange and mutual enrichment. We can promote, and we want to promote, this relationship by building new policies to bring us closer to the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, with the goal of making that sea a basin of peace and harmonious coexistence among diverse civilizations and religions.

Let me return to the central issue of this session, the global partnership for development, in order to clarify one point. There is a risk that the reinvigoration of multilateralism, United Nations reform, and a collective commitment to the various theatres of crisis will produce no lasting effect unless development issues are treated as priorities. It is up to the United Nations as the driving force, the glue of solidarity among peoples, and the fullest expression of multilateralism, to keep development at the top of the international agenda. For it is in the connection between security, solidarity and development that the added value of the United Nations lies, in the full awareness that there can be no peace without development and no development without peace.

It is not enough to enunciate at this rostrum, as speakers have been doing for six years now, the words "Millennium Development Goals". We must get to work and carry them out, starting with the adoption of the financial, trade, technological and environmental steps required and aiming for a very specific, ambitious goal that responds above all to a moral duty: to guarantee a dignified life for every human being.

I wish to conclude with a few considerations on the fundamental principles and values that inspire our action when we deal with multilateralism, the search for peace, security and development, and north-south relations. All these issues coalesce in a defence of life and struggle against all forms of hatred, violence, discrimination and marginalization, undeniable values that, together with democratic principles, are the foundations of coexistence among peoples and should inspire the action of the world's nations. Today, sadly, these values are still denied and trampled upon, as if we had learned nothing from the horrors of the past. We cannot sit by watching indifferently in the face of barbarous acts. We are for peace and solidarity. We are against the death penalty, injustice and human suffering. That is something we must always remember, especially on the eve of major decisions. That is what is expected of us from those who sacrificed their lives for peace, for a righteous cause, for an ideal, to defend freedom, the same freedom that we enjoy every day in a democracy.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Milo Djukanović, President of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the President of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro.

Mr. Milo Djukanović, President of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Milo Djukanović, President of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Djukanović (Montenegro) (*spoke in Montenegran; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me first to welcome your election, Madam, to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-

first session, confident that it will result in important decisions in the common interest.

It is with particular pride and emotion that I wish to recall the sixtieth session, during which many decisions, important for the Organization, were made. In Montenegro it will be remembered as historic since it was at that session that our nation was admitted as a fully fledged Member of this unique world organization. I wish therefore to thank the Secretary-General and the President of the sixtieth session, Mr. Eliasson, and the other representatives of nations in this forum for having contributed to making the ceremony of Montenegro's admission as the 192nd Member State of the United Nations so uplifting.

It is a great honour and pleasure at this session to represent Montenegro which for the first time now participates in the debate as a fully-fledged Member. As the President of Montenegro, Filip Vujanović, has already stressed from this rostrum, we see this as a huge chance, as well as a huge responsibility. Montenegro is a young European nation that has existed on its own on the international scene for only a few months, but it is firmly determined to continue with even more strength to contribute to peace, stability and prosperity, by respecting and promoting the underlying ideas, principles and goals of the United Nations and its documents. I am strongly convinced that in the time in which we live the importance of a State, big or small, primarily depends on its contribution to the respect for and implementation of these fundamental international values and standards. This is relevant in both a regional and a broader context.

It is in the nature of small States to be more sensitive to the need for tolerance and dialogue, for openness, and international relations based on mutual trust, equality and solidarity, and also to the value of unity in diversity, which is the axiom of this time, and of global integration, the basis on which today's Montenegro is developing. In this sense I would add that small nations are destined to be elitist. I hope that it is not presumptuous to say that Montenegro promoted these principles best in the recent referendum that we organized in full partnership with the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Council of Europe, proving that even in south-eastern Europe the most difficult and most sensitive issues — such as the status issue — can be tackled in a democratic fashion and in accordance with the highest international standards. We are therefore proud to stress that the democratic process and outcome of the Montenegrin referendum is also a European policy victory in our region, and are confident that through this example we can contribute to stability and good-neighbourly relations in our region.

Indeed, regional cooperation is inseparable from European and global integration, which are essentially about issues of peace, stability, security and prosperity, the more so as the globalization that is gaining momentum confronts us with new challenges and new threats of a political, environmental and socio-economic nature. The issues of today, such as international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal migration and trafficking, poverty, threats to the environment, and so forth, highlight the need for common action.

This vision of the future is exemplified in the Millennium Declaration, which projects the principles and goals of the Charter to the world in a new age, highlighting common responsibility and solidarity in order to accomplish a vision of a more secure, prosperous and just world. Without stability there is no democracy, just as without democracy there is no stability or sustainable economic development. These are interdependent processes that must take place simultaneously, and that highlights the importance of accomplishing the Millennium Goals. All this brings to the fore the importance of efficient multilateralism through action by the United Nations, which needs to be reformed in order to adequately cope with today's challenges, as well as other international and regional organizations and all nations.

With full awareness and responsibility we will continue to build in Montenegro stable institutions that guarantee the rule of law, freedoms, equality and non-discrimination, human and minority rights as well as solidarity and a market economy. We will also continue to promote multi-ethnic harmony and tolerance, convinced that religious and cultural diversity is enriching and conducive to greater stability and growth. It is also conducive to striking a balance between the State and the individual, fully in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

In this context I wish to express my gratitude to the specialized United Nations agencies for their

efforts and support. I believe it is important to stress from this rostrum that in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and our European partners we will build the first eco-building designed to house United Nations agencies operating in Montenegro.

We are very proud that at the very outset of life on its own Montenegro was admitted to the United Nations, the institution that is the meeting point for a multitude of cultures and identities, which it merges into one address that each and every one of us identifies with, an institution in which all peoples and States enjoy full equality. We see this as historic proof of acknowledgement of respect for the fundamental values and goals of the United Nations, still equally valid today. I am confident that Montenegro will distinguish itself even more as a trustworthy and constructive partner and that our cooperation within the United Nations will take on a new quality and will remain a key component of the political action of Montenegro. Today's Montenegro has a clear vision of development and of its European perspective, and is ready to fully contribute to a united Europe and the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Milo Djukanović, President of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sir Michael Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

Sir Michael T. Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency, Sir Michael Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sir Michael T. Somare (Papua New Guinea): I wish to convey Papua New Guinea's congratulations to you, Madam President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I assure you of my country's full cooperation during your presidency. We compliment your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his stewardship of our work during his tenure. We also congratulate him on his appointment as Sweden's Foreign Minister and wish him well.

On 10 October 1975, 24 days after Papua New Guinea attained political independence, I stood at this very rostrum and addressed the Assembly with a lot of hope and expectations. Like many developing countries coming out from the colonial yoke, Papua New Guinea committed itself to the principles and purposes of the United Nations. I said: "I state our fundamental commitment to the maintenance of peace throughout our world and our undertaking to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations Organization."

We believed that the United Nations was the most appropriate body to achieve our aspirations of meaningful economic development, respect for our sovereignty and the attainment of a peaceful and secure world. The harsh reality today is that these aspirations remain largely unfulfilled for many of us. Our record will indicate lost opportunities to realize the promise of a better world.

Our world today is marked by an inequitable global trading order and a hostile security environment. Wanton globalization and unfettered trade liberalization are affecting many of us in ways that are detrimental to the livelihood of our people. Unilateral actions by the big and powerful to resolve disputes are no longer incidental, but are the order of the day. We note the increasing incidence of human atrocities, genocides, wars, poverty, terrorism, the emergence of HIV/AIDS, and an increase in malaria and tuberculosis. Our streets and communities are littered with small arms and light weapons. The smuggling of drugs and humans and other illegal activities are on the rise. Environmental degradation and climate change continue unabated. We must confront these issues urgently. To complement efforts in other forums, Papua New Guinea, with other countries of the Pacific region, has agreed to pool its limited resources under the Pacific plan to address these issues.

Papua New Guinea continues to believe that the United Nations offers the best hope for its Member States to address these ongoing concerns and other emerging challenges facing humanity today. In this regard, my country supports the ongoing United Nations reform initiatives that seek to make its

operations more effective and responsive. We must ensure that its collective security mandates and functions, and its various organizations, are strengthened and not weakened. We are pleased to note the establishment of the Human Rights Council and Peacebuilding Commission. Papua New Guinea believes in a revitalized General Assembly whose role and authority reflect its broad membership. We must press on with the reform of the Security Council with courage and boldness so that it reflects the political and economic realities of today. An expanded Security Council must be more democratic and transparent. Its membership must include developing countries, while maintaining geographic balance and representation.

Global trade today is characterized more by the unfair practices of those already holding decided advantages than by the opportunities it offers to developing countries such as Papua New Guinea. Our efforts to develop a more equitable trading order are hampered by the reluctance of our developed partners to open their economies and engage in genuine development discussions. Adding insult to injury, many of our developed partners have yet to meet the targets they agreed with respect to Official Development Assistance.

While we appreciate the efforts of some of our developed partners to ease the burden of debt under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, we are disappointed that many of them have not shown the same leadership on the Doha Development Round, leading to its collapse. We are calling for developing countries to join us in framing a new and true development round. We must exercise leadership rather than passively allowing others to chart our future.

Despite these difficulties, Papua New Guinea is pursuing economic development programmes that are based on an export-driven economic growth strategy. At the heart of this policy objective is the focus on rural development. We have developed a five-year medium-term development strategy and aligned it with the Millennium Development Goals. Achieving those goals by 2015 is a tremendous challenge for Papua New Guinea but we have taken the first step in providing budget funding for its implementation. We call for the support of the United Nations system and other genuine development partners to meet these vital commitments.

As a result of better policy coordination, stricter implementation of structural reform and prudent financial and economic management, Papua New Guinea has attained macroeconomic and fiscal stability. Our economy is growing, interest rates have fallen, and the exchange rate has been stabilized. Our foreign exchange reserves are at an all-time high. We are using these gains to reinvest in productive sectors of our economy and in delivering services to our people. Development partners must play a supportive role to sustain these gains. This can be done through fair trade opportunities, equitable markets, increased foreign investment, transfer of technology, capacity-building and providing quality overseas development assistance.

I now turn to an issue about which my country feels strongly, that of climate change and sea-level rise. For us this is not academic, it is reality. Small islands and low-lying atolls in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific region are being submerged by rising sea levels. As I speak, my own people are being resettled to higher ground. Papua New Guinea's strong position on the environment is drawn from the preamble to our national Constitution, which states:

> "We declare our fourth goal to be for Papua New Guinea's natural resources and environment to be conserved and used for the collective benefit of us all, and be replenished for the benefit of future generations."

That constitutional imperative underpins my country's whole approach to sustainable development objectives, including those contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Mauritius Strategy.

Environmental degradation is occurring at a frightening pace. Scientific studies suggest that climate change is causing increasing incidences of environmental catastrophes such as hurricanes, tsunamis, landslides and flash floods. Our planet is in distress. As co-inhabitants of this world we must all equally share responsibility to address the root causes of this problem. We urge industrialized countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. We call upon those that have not yet done so to accede to and ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

Papua New Guinea is prepared to play its part to protect and conserve the world's tropical rainforest with the aim of stabilizing the earth's climate. The findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change suggest that an estimated 20 per cent to 25 per cent of annual global emissions were generated through land-use change, primarily from the degradation of forest resources. In this context it is crucial for us to protect the tropical rainforests through sustainable and fair market-based incentives.

The dilemma is that for some of us the forestry sector is a major revenue earner, a provider of much-needed employment, a facilitator of important infrastructure projects, and a catalyst for the provision of basic services in rural areas. The present incentives offered by international markets for agriculture, forestry and emissions reductions are inadequate. These are perverse incentives from the standpoint of the environment. Papua New Guinea, along with Costa Rica, has formed a new Coalition for Rainforest Nations that includes many other countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. Together we are pursuing an initiative to access global carbon markets and to support efforts to reduce rates of deforestation. Simply put, this approach seeks to recognize the contribution of resource owners to conserving and protecting rainforests for the benefit of mankind. We invite more nations to join our efforts to create new markets and reform outmoded market and regulatory mechanisms. That is necessary if we are to contribute more effectively towards environmental sustainability, economic development, climate stability and poverty reduction.

The initiative on deforestation is part of a broader agenda being pursued by my Government to implement the Millennium Development Goal to ensure environmental sustainability. We are convinced that by implementing the seventh goal we will harness our ability to achieve environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth. Many times developing countries are drawn into false promises of international investment. Often we find our natural resources exploited, leaving us with neither the resource nor the money. We will not allow this to continue. We want wealth from our natural resources to remain within our nations to fuel our economic growth.

The threat of HIV/AIDS is real in many of our countries and has serious implications for social and economic development. In Papua New Guinea my Government has passed HIV/AIDS legislation, underpinned by a comprehensive HIV/AIDS policy framework. To ensure close scrutiny I have vested my department with the responsibility of overseeing implementation. In addition, I have appointed a special minister to assist me in providing political leadership on this particular issue. But our experience suggests that national action alone is not enough. It requires a concerted global response. This is a war that must be waged on all fronts and by all countries. We thank the United Nations and its related agencies for their efforts to address this issue. We also applaud the bold leadership of former United States President Mr. Bill Clinton and of Mr. Bill Gates in this regard.

Of equal importance are the battles against malaria, tuberculosis and other preventable diseases. While we, as a global community, have focused on HIV/AIDS and bird flu, this has diluted our attention to malaria, which remains the biggest killer disease in my country. I call upon our development partners to support Papua New Guinea and other countries in maintaining perspective on these challenges.

Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a serious threat to international peace and security. It must be condemned irrespective of who perpetrates it. All countries and peoples of the world have a serious responsibility to stand united and fight this evil. However, Papua New Guinea is concerned about the erosion of the international community's moral authority to address this issue. It is unhelpful to our credibility if certain of our members choose to address this issue in flagrant violation of international norms and universally agreed conventions. As with other cross-border challenges, Member States will require the support of the United Nations and development partners with capacity-building and other necessary resources to effectively fight global terrorism.

The conflict in the Middle East, despite various United Nations resolutions, remains unresolved. Papua New Guinea appeals to all parties to the conflict, including those Powers with the capacity to influence a positive outcome, to make the hard concessions necessary for a peaceful resolution of this long-standing issue. The recent confrontation in Lebanon resulted in the loss of innocent lives and massive destruction to infrastructure. Papua New Guinea appeals for restraint by all parties and urges that full use be made of the dispute settlement procedures of the United Nations. Comprehensive and lasting solutions must be found to the issues that led to the conflict. Neighbouring countries and the international community as a whole can make positive contributions by shepherding a process that allows for genuine

dialogue to take place. We commend the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and European countries such as France, Italy and Germany and others that are contributing troops to maintain the ceasefire.

Papua New Guinea is extremely concerned about the proliferation among States of nuclear, chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction. We continue to maintain that there is no real justification for the retention and further development of these instruments of war. We call upon all countries to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and other related treaties to reduce the threat to international peace and security by weapons of mass destruction. Sadly, we were reminded by the Secretary-General yesterday of the apathy that surrounds actions on non-proliferation and disarmament.

The work of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization remains unfinished. We still have 16 non-self-governing territories, some in the Pacific, that are yet to exercise their right to self-determination. The referendum in Tokelau demonstrated a true spirit of cooperation between Tokelau and New Zealand. We congratulate both Governments and assure the people of Tokelau of our respect for their decision to remain in free association with New Zealand.

I conclude by saying that the world has changed in ways that not only provide opportunities, but also offer more complex challenges for Members of the United Nations. The emergence of a trend over the years to try to resolve these challenges outside the principles and framework prescribed by the United Nations has resulted in a world worse than the founders of the Organization envisaged. We must renew our commitment and faith in the United Nations and seek to reform it in ways that reflect the realities of today.

At this juncture I take the opportunity to pay a special tribute to the outgoing Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his outstanding contribution to the United Nations and the world. We wish him well. As this is likely to be the last General Assembly session in which I take part, I take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed in one way or another in support of Papua New Guinea since independence. When I brought my nation to take its seat in this Assembly 31 years ago I said, and I reaffirm today, that within the limits of our resources Papua New Guinea will play an active and positive role in the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Sir Michael T. Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Esteban Lazo Hernández, Vice-President of the Republic of Cuba

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Esteban Lazo Hernández, Vice-President of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Esteban Lazo Hernández, Vice-President of the Republic of Cuba, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Lazo Hernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): As President Hugo Chávez said in his brilliant statement, only four days ago the Fourteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Cuba, concluded. Today I speak on behalf of the Movement's Chairman, President Fidel Castro, fulfilling our obligation to inform the Assembly of the main decisions agreed at the summit conference in Havana.

As First Vice-President of the Council of State and Minister of the Republic of Cuba, Raúl Castro, said in his opening speech:

> "The current international situation, characterized by the one super-Power's irrational attempts to control the world, aided by its allies, shows that we need to be increasingly united in defence of the principles and purposes upon which the Non-Aligned Movement was established, which are those enshrined in international law and the Charter of the United Nations."

While the founding of the Movement was necessary more than four decades ago, its continued relevance in today's world is beyond doubt. The summit held in Cuba was an indisputable success, in spite of the threats and pressures of those who oppose the unity and common efforts of the countries of the south. The summit saw high levels of participation, in

terms both of the number of countries attending the conference and of the attendance of heads of State or Government. Profound and fruitful debates were held in an atmosphere of true understanding, unity and cohesion, which allowed for the adoption of documents of crucial importance to the role of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As the new Chairman, Cuba was given clear mandates and an action programme that will govern its activities as head of the Movement. As a result of the summit, the Non-Aligned Movement has been strengthened and consequently so has the political unity of the countries of the South. The diverse and heterogeneous nature of the Movement's membership, far from weakening it, constitutes its essential strength. These features have allowed for the creation of solid consensus that will be a positive contribution to our efforts to overcome the many and serious challenges humanity faces today. The commendable work of Malaysia as the Movement's Chairman over the past three years was acknowledged at the Summit. There was no cause or demand by a country of the south which was not duly considered or which did not meet with the support of the Movement.

Progress in the defence of multilateralism, demanding respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, and ensuring the full realization of our peoples' right to development and peace were ratified at the Summit as the Movement's principles, whose implementation was urgently needed. The Heads of State or Government decided to work to suppress acts of aggression or other actions contrary to the preservation of peace and to encourage the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

The summit called on all nations to abstain from the use of force or from threatening to use force against the territorial integrity or independence of any State. Participating nations promoted the development of relations of friendship based on respect for the principle of equal rights and the will of all peoples to struggle against foreign occupation. They urged nations to extend international cooperation with a view to overcoming the serious economic, social, cultural and humanitarian challenges that face the world and to promoting respect for the human rights and fundamental liberties of all for the benefit of all. The fundamental and inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination was reaffirmed in Havana. The non-aligned countries agreed that world peace and security are today more imperilled than ever as a result, among other factors, of the growing trend of the most powerful States to resort to unilateral measures and to the threat of pre-emptive wars.

The Movement's commitment to general and complete disarmament, and nuclear disarmament in particular, under strict and efficient international monitoring, was underscored. The summit also reaffirmed the basic and inalienable right of all States to research, develop, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to be free from any kind of discrimination in this connection, in conformity with their respective international obligations. Similarly, the summit clearly and firmly pronounced itself to be against terrorism, double standards in international relations, coercive unilateral measures against any nation, regime-change policies, and the failure of developed countries to fulfil their commitments in economic and social areas.

The heads of State or Government reaffirmed their hope to live in a peaceful world in which all nations have the right to a better future and a fair and equitable world order based on the sustainable development of all nations. They affirmed that in its current form globalization perpetuates and even exacerbates the marginalization of the countries of the south and demanded that it be radically transformed into a positive force for change for the benefit of all peoples.

The participants reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to have their own State, and condemned the Government of Israel for the new wave of crimes and massacres in Gaza and other occupied territories. They also vigorously condemned Israel's merciless acts of aggression against Lebanon and the serious violations of that nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The people and Government of Bolivia, facing attempts to destabilize the country instigated by external forces, received a gesture of support and solidarity from the summit. The process under way in that sister nation, aimed at guaranteeing the real rights of all Bolivians and at securing full national control over the country's natural resources, was offered solid support.

The Movement considered with great concern the aggressive policies and intensification of action aimed at undermining the stability of the Bolivarian Republic

of Venezuela and expressed support for the inalienable right of the Venezuelan people to determine its form of government and choose its economic, political and social system, free from foreign intervention, subversion, coercion or restrictions of any kind. The non-aligned undertook to promote and participate in a true process of democratization and reform of the United Nations so as to leave behind the anti-democratic impositions and practices of the Security Council and to give the General Assembly its due decisive role, in conformity with the roles and powers described in the United Nations Charter.

I have mentioned only a few examples of the positions adopted at the summit held in Havana with respect to the most diverse issues on the international agenda. The documents adopted will be officially distributed to all United Nations Member States. A number of the decisions adopted at the summit will soon be put into practice at this session of the General Assembly.

Cuba is aware of the immense responsibility inherent in presiding over the Non-Aligned Movement at one of the most difficult times in human history, when we face more inequality and injustice than ever before. We shall not rest in our efforts to have the Movement occupy the place it can and must occupy in the international arena, in keeping with not only its broad membership of 118 countries — nearly two thirds of the membership of the United Nations — but also its history of acting on behalf of the loftiest causes.

Inaugurating the Sixth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana 27 years ago, President Fidel Castro said:

> "The struggle for peace and for a just economic order and a workable solution to the pressing problems that weigh on our peoples is, in our opinion, increasingly becoming the main question posed to the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Peace and the immense risks that threaten it, is not something that should be left exclusively in the hands of the big military Powers. Peace is possible, but world peace can only be assured to the extent that all countries are consciously determined to fight for it — peace, not just for a part of the world, but for all peoples."

A few days later in this same Hall, reporting on that summit, President Castro said:

> "The sounds of weapons, of threatening language, and of arrogant behaviour in the international arena must cease. We have had enough of the illusion that the problems of the world can be solved by nuclear weapons. Bombs may kill the hungry, the sick, and the ignorant, but they cannot kill hunger, disease or ignorance. Nor can they kill the righteous rebellion of the peoples."

The countries of the South will work united for justice, peace and the development of our nations and the entire world, convinced that a better world is possible if we all struggle for it.

I should now like to say a few words on behalf of the people and Government of Cuba. Our people's exercise of its right to self-determination faces new threats. The Bush Administration has stepped up its brutally hostile measures against Cuba with new economic sanctions that further intensify what is already the longest blockade human history has known. More severe reprisals are also being taken against those from other nations who have business dealings with Cuba, and financial transactions with our country are viciously persecuted. The very Government of the United States recognizes that it is spending more today in persecuting and punishing those who have business dealings with Cuba than in monitoring the finances of those who attacked the twin towers.

This past June the Bush Administration approved the second version of its most recent plan of aggression and domination against our country, aimed not only at overthrowing the revolution but also at destroying the Cuban nation. In violation of international norms and laws, an unprecedented build-up of financial and material support for subversive actions aimed at overthrowing the constitutional order freely chosen by the Cuban people is being promoted. That anti-Cuban plan contains a chapter that is being kept secret.

The precedents for these decisions are the covert actions undertaken against the Cuban revolution, which include mercenary invasions, terrorist actions, the introduction of plagues and epidemics to the country, and more than 600 plots to assassinate Fidel. Thousands of Cubans have lost their lives or been maimed for life as a result of this criminal policy. As the height of hypocrisy and irresponsibility, the Government of the United States tolerates the presence of, and protects, the terrorists who plan new actions against our people on United States soil. While manoeuvring to free the murderers responsible for monstrous crimes — such as the notorious

international terrorist and CIA agent Luis Posada Carriles, whom they refuse to extradite to Venezuela — the United States Government is illegally and unjustly keeping five courageous anti-terrorist Cuban activists in prison.

In spite of all these acts of aggression and the criminal blockade, the Cuban people will never be defeated. Cuba's internationalist efforts continue unhindered. More than 30,000 Cuban doctors and other Cuban health professionals are saving lives in 68 different countries today. We are participating in the struggle against illiteracy on several continents. We are developing a plan to train 100,000 doctors for the third world, and we are helping hundreds of thousands of people in many countries to regain their sight through Operation Miracle. With these efforts we are just fulfilling our fundamental duty in solidarity to aid all the peoples of the world.

Cuba is making progress and will continue to advance and face the future with optimism and unity. Its educated and hard-working people, who consider humanity to be their homeland, will struggle hand in hand with the peoples the Assembly represents for the right to live in peace, justice and dignity for all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Cuba for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Esteban Lazo Hernández, Vice-President of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Heir Apparent of the State of Qatar, to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure at the outset to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I wish you every success in your endeavours. I should also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his efforts during the Assembly's sixtieth session. Our thanks also go to Mr. Kofi Annan, who has been working to strengthen the role of the United Nations.

During the September 2005 Summit, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to the global partnership for development in order to achieve internationally agreed development objectives. The United Nations system remains one of the most important pillars of international support for that partnership. I wish to recall here that the State of Qatar has always been a supportive partner in development efforts, particularly in combating poverty, because all that has positive results for stability and international peace and security.

In 2001 Qatar hosted the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, which culminated in the Doha Ministerial Declaration. It also hosted the South Summit in 2005, in which His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, launched his initiative to establish the South's Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance. Moreover, His Highness reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to meet the internationally agreed official development assistance target relative to its gross national product. His Highness also offered to host the first Review Conference of the International Conference on Financing for Development. I am pleased to note that the State of Qatar will be hosting the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, scheduled for 30 October to 1 November this year.

I should also like to recall here that Qatar has extended emergency and disaster relief assistance and made many contributions to the various United Nations funds and programmes.

We must work to strengthen the role of the United Nations and revitalize and support its institutions so that they can carry out the tasks entrusted to them in different parts of the world. However, if the Organization is to discharge its role in full, its Charter must be adhered to and respected. Furthermore, an agreement must be reached on a new formula to reform the Security Council and update its working methods. The General Assembly must be allowed to play its role in the maintenance of international peace and security alongside the Security Council.

We were shocked and astonished at the disproportionate Israeli response against fraternal Lebanon, which killed hundreds of innocent civilians, totally decimated its infrastructure and left scores of Lebanese towns and villages in ruins. It has also displaced one quarter of Lebanon's population, which is indeed a full-scale war crime.

The Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question must be accorded top priority, for which a comprehensive, permanent and just solution is urgently needed. The Palestinian question is an example of suffering visited upon a people whose legitimate rights were denied, a question that has been on the agendas of

the Security Council and the General Assembly for more than 50 years. Therefore the international community must review its position towards a fundamental issue that it has left unresolved for more than half a century, thus compounding the tragedy of the Palestinian people.

Compelling Israel to implement United Nations resolutions is a collective duty that we must all fulfil so that international legitimacy will not be branded as selective. The Palestinian people must be enabled to exercise their right to self-determination and to establish their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

A comprehensive, peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict should also be achieved, on the basis of Israel's withdrawal from all the territories it occupied in 1967, including the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Sheba'a farms. We also stress that the guarantee of permanent peace, security and stability in the region lies in making the Middle East a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction without any exceptions.

The difficult situation in fraternal Iraq requires our cooperation in order to help it overcome this untenable situation and its repercussions. We have continuously reaffirmed our commitment to the unity and sovereignty of Iraq, to the rights of Iraqis to live in dignity and freedom and to rebuild their country, and for Iraq to regain its well-deserved place in the region and among the family of nations.

We want to pay tribute to the Government of the Sudan, which after tireless efforts has succeeded in establishing peace in the south of the country. It continues its sincere efforts to achieve security and stability in different parts of the country. We fully support those efforts and look forward to more support from the international community to fraternal Sudan in order to preserve its unity and territorial integrity.

We also support ongoing efforts by the League of Arab States to achieve national reconciliation in fraternal Somalia and to restore the rule of law in that country. We call upon the international community to support those efforts so that stability and security can be restored to Somalia.

We reaffirm the important role of the United Nations and the need to enhance it so that it can put international relations on a solid foundation of understanding and common interests. We also stress the importance of resolving conflicts and disputes by peaceful means and of cooperation among all nations to end violence and combat terrorism. We must avoid squandering our resources and wasting our energies on wars and conflicts. Instead, we should channel them towards development and progress. We look forward to a new world governed by the principles of justice, equality, freedom, democracy and peaceful coexistence among its peoples, nations and civilizations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Sheikh Al Nahyan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, to extend to you, Madam President, and to your fraternal country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, our heartfelt congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are confident that your wide experience will enable you to deal wisely and competently with the issues on our agenda, and we wish you every success. We also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the skilful manner in which he managed the work of the sixtieth session, and to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his outstanding efforts, which have significantly contributed to strengthening the role of this international organization in addressing the challenges the world has faced during his term of office.

In spite of all the expectations that we hoped would be fulfilled in the areas of establishing peace and collective security, development, strengthening human rights and the rule of law, and reform of the United Nations, we meet today amid extremely serious security, political and economic conditions that have resulted in increasing poverty and epidemics and have prevented the sustainable development mechanisms from achieving the desired development goals of the 2005 Summit. Instead of intensifying our efforts to strengthen international relations and enhance positive investment in economic globalization, we had to direct our efforts towards finding temporary solutions for the grave security threats facing our world today in many regions.

The major weakness demonstrated by the performance of some bodies of this international organization, especially in those entrusted with maintaining international peace and security, requires a reconsideration of the ways to reform its main

structures and working methods, particularly for the Security Council. Most recent events have proved its inability to take the immediate and effective measures needed to stop acts of aggression and to end occupation.

Therefore, as we study the proposals by the Secretary-General for developing the work of the Organization, we must ensure that reform is based on the principles of equality among States in rights and duties in order to ensure that developing and small countries are increasingly and effectively represented in the Security Council in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution. It is also necessary to strengthen the working methods of the Security Council to ensure that it does not infringe upon the competencies of the Secretariat, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, so that the performance and effectiveness of those bodies can be strengthened and increased.

The United Arab Emirates — which collaborates with the sisterly countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the League of Arab States and other groups in supporting all possible diplomatic and mediation efforts aimed at containing the hotbeds of tension and conflicts in the Middle East region, including the Arabian Gulf — reiterates the importance of resolving differences through peaceful means and of strengthening confidence-building measures based on the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. All this falls under our common responsibility to maintain the requirements of regional and international peace, security and stability.

Therefore, we ask the Islamic Republic of Iran to demonstrate its goodwill towards finding a just and lasting settlement for its occupation of the three United Arab Emirates islands, Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, by responding to our country's repeated initiatives, which were endorsed by the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, the Council of the League of Arab States and the international community. Those initiatives call for initiating direct and serious negotiations on this issue or referring it to the International Court of Justice for legal arbitration.

We support the right of countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We optimistically look forward to continuing the Iranian-European talks on Iran's nuclear question in order to reach a lasting and peaceful settlement and to ensure that the safety and security of the peoples and countries of the region are not exposed to any threat, danger or unnecessary new confrontations.

We also stress that the international community must deal with this question with utmost transparency so as to ensure the implementation of all relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular those calling for the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf. That makes it incumbent upon Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to subject all of its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime.

The United Arab Emirates supports the political process in Iraq and efforts for its reconstruction, and hopes that the efforts of the Iraqi Government will lead to achieving national unity, consolidating security and stability in Iraq, and implementing the recommendations of the Abu Dhabi Declaration and the New York conference on the International Compact for the Reconstruction of Iraq.

We also reaffirm our full support for all regional and international measures to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as it constitutes a grave threat to the security and sovereignty of States and causes unjustified depletion of civilian lives and properties. We also support international efforts aimed at convening an international conference to define this phenomenon, address its causes and set the standards for differentiating between terrorism and the right of people to self-determination.

As we all strive to create a suitable environment for promoting dialogue among civilizations and strengthening religious tolerance, we heard with regret and surprise the recent statements by Pope Benedict XVI, which gave an opportunity to the extremists to deepen the gap of intolerance and to raise doubts about the intentions of others. That makes it incumbent on us to avoid repeating such statements in future in order to promote further understanding between religions and civilizations.

We are deeply concerned at the continued inability of the international community to solve the Palestinian question and establish peace in the Middle East. That has encouraged Israel to continue its occupation of the Palestinian territories, the Sheba'a farms in Lebanon and the Syrian Golan, and to repeat its aggressions on various levels. Therefore, we urge the United Nations to respond today to the recent

initiative of the League of Arab States, which calls upon the international organization to play an effective role in reviving the peace process in the Middle East and resume direct negotiations on all tracks, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We also affirm that consolidation of peace and stability in the Middle East region cannot be achieved through military power or the continued and deliberate destruction of the infrastructure in the Palestinian territories and in Lebanon, but through compelling Israel to ensure its full compliance with international resolutions, including the resumption of negotiations with the Palestinian Authority and the release of Palestinian funds and the thousands of Palestinian detainees and prisoners. Israel is further requested to open the crossing points to secure delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, to remove settlements and the separation wall and to withdraw fully from all the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, so that the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, can be declared.

We welcome the considerable efforts by the Lebanese Government to extend its control throughout its national territories, with the support of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. In this regard we demand that the international community intensify its pressures on Israel to compel it to fulfil its legal obligations, as provided in Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including its full respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, handing over maps of landmines and entering into negotiations on the exchange of prisoners. We also affirm the importance of doubling the international assistance directed to the reconstruction of Lebanon.

As for the Sudan — and following up the circumstances relating to Security Council resolution 1706 (2006) — we had hoped that the Sudan would have been given sufficient time to resolve the Darfur question internally. We declare our support for the efforts of the Sudanese Government to find a lasting solution to this question. We hope that the United Nations and the African Union will continue their positive role in this regard, in conformity with the Arab League's efforts, in order to maintain the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Sudan.

We also call for strengthening of the efforts and endeavours to reconcile political differences and disputes in regions such as Somalia, Afghanistan, other African countries and troubled regions of the world in order to contain tensions and conflicts in those regions and assist their peoples to realize their aspirations towards permanent peace, stability and prosperity.

The United Arab Emirates, which incorporated the Millennium Development Goals in its national development policy and has come a long way in the process of achieving economic and human development, has extended generous assistance to many poor and affected countries. In this regard, the United Arab Emirates would like to stress that with the ongoing problems of poverty, infectious diseases and unemployment, in addition to other economic, social and environmental problems, the international community must develop a firm and effective international mechanism that ensures a continuous flow of assistance to developing countries so as to enable them to improve their living conditions and build their national economies.

It is incumbent upon the advanced States, especially the Group of Eight, to fulfil their commitments as agreed at international conferences, especially in easing the onerous commercial conditions imposed on developing countries' trade, on their efforts to attract foreign capital and investment and on their use of advanced technology for peaceful purposes, in order to avoid marginalizing those countries and to ensure better participation for them in international trade.

Finally, we hope that our deliberations on the agenda items during this session will have a positive outcome that will contribute to addressing the critical issues we face today, and that they will enhance our common efforts to create a world based on the principles of the rule of law, justice, tolerance and peace.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

United Nations A/61/PV.13

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 September 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Berger Perdomo (*spoke in Spanish*): In 2006, several important anniversaries coincide and provide a background for our debate. For the United Nations, 2006 represents a new opportunity to assess progress since the adoption six years ago of the package of commitments generally known as the Millennium Development Goals, which received renewed impetus during the 2005 World Summit. The outcome of that summit provides the main theme of our debate during this Assembly, as well as the guidelines for the reform of our Organization. For this great city, the site of the Headquarters of our Organization, 2006 marks the fifth anniversary of the tragic events of 11 September 2001, which altered history forever. For Guatemala, 2006 marks the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords that put an end to a bloody internal conflict lasting over four decades. For our Secretary-General, it marks the end of his 10-year term, which has had a highly positive result: a result that I want to acknowledge and for which I would like to thank him.

I will move on to address some of these substantial issues. But before doing so, I would like to state our appreciation of Mr. Jan Eliasson's stewardship and exceptional leadership of the previous session of this Assembly. At the same time, we welcome your election, Madam President, and have no doubt that you will bring us to a safe port.

I should like to allude very briefly to four matters: compliance with the Guatemalan Peace Accords, a process in which the United Nations participated very closely; follow-up of the 2005 World Summit, especially Millennium Goal 8, namely, to foster a global partnership for development; our views on certain aspects of United Nations reform; and our views on certain positive developments that affect international relations.

The brief time allotted to me does not allow me to go into detail, but it is undeniable that we have advanced substantially in the direction of giving concrete expression to the vision contained in the Peace Accords. More to the point, if we contrast today's Guatemala to that of 1996, we now have a society that is more plural, tolerant, deliberative and participative than in the past. Our representative democracy is taking root, after three free and transparent elections. The army is truly subordinated to

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the civil Government. Important progress has been achieved in strengthening a multi-ethnic and multilingual society. The State is committed to respecting of civil, political and human rights and to promoting greater participation of women in our society. Significant efforts have been in strengthening the administration of justice and consolidating the rule of law. The proportion of public expenditure assigned to the provision of social services has increased significantly in the past few years. We have assisted the victims of the conflict through a programme of reparation payments. We promote the National Front against Hunger as a priority of my Government. Likewise, we recently adopted a policy on rural development, which was prepared and will be implemented with the participation of entrepreneurs, peasants and trade unions.

At the same time, we recognize that much remains to be done. Human rights violations persist, often linked to an increase in crime, including organized crime. It is for this reason that we invited the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to open an office in Guatemala and to join us in strengthening our own capacity to defend and protect vulnerable groups. We have also invited the United Nations to support an initiative to establish a commission to investigate illicit and clandestine groups. Furthermore, we have promoted domestic legislation to combat the scourge of crime, including the recently promulgated law against organized crime.

The commitments contained in the Peace Accords entail serious budgetary implications. To address them, we recently sent to Congress, and Congress approved, an act to combat tax evasion. At the same time, we have forged a broad consensus on an agreed tax package that ensures the financing of future development through improvements in the allocation and administration of public expenditures and the collection of taxes.

My Government assigns priority to the recognition of the identity and rights of indigenous peoples. In this regard, we trust that the General Assembly will soon adopt the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which saw light in the Human Rights Council and which will contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

In summary, our Government Plan has embraced the Peace Accords and is committed nationally to complying with them. In 2005, a Framework Act on the Peace Accords was passed in order to strengthen the institutional aspects of the peace process. One of our goals is to achieve socio-economic development that is participatory and responds to the needs of the entire population.

This leads me to the second item, namely, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Indeed, a major part of our Government programme is entirely consistent with those goals, especially with regard to combating poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education. Our policies, which emphasize rural development, take an approach that favours the poorest strata of our society. The efforts undertaken have been based mostly on domestic resources — Government and civil society — but we have also received support from the international community in the context of a genuine partnership.

The international community's respect for our priorities has grown, and it has increasingly adapted its methods to our budgetary procedures. From our country's point of view, significant progress has been achieved since the International Conference on Financing for Development was held in 2002. We have also noted a reversal, over the past four years, in the earlier trend towards declining official development assistance (ODA). It is hoped that the new trend of increasing ODA will persist and accelerate, especially in favour of the least developed countries.

In contrast to the relatively encouraging picture in the area of financing for development, it is a source of great concern that the negotiations of the Doha Development Round have been suspended. That is a serious setback for the global economy and especially for the chances of developing countries to improve their participation in international trade.

If the potential of the Development Round is not salvaged, which must include the dismantling of agricultural subsidies as well as other restrictive practices of trade in agricultural products that persist among the main developed economies, it will be difficult to continue referring to a global partnership for development as posited by the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, it is urgently necessary to renew the negotiations of the Doha Round under the aegis of the World Trade Organization. On that subject, we also support the strengthening of South-South cooperation in all areas.

Moving on now to the third part of my remarks, we believe that the reforms undertaken at the United Nations since 2000, and in particular since the 2005 Summit, have been significant and headed in the right direction. We identify with the new Human Rights Council, of which we are a member, and support the fulfilment of its role in promoting and protecting human rights at the global level.

We also understand the considerable potential of the new Peacebuilding Commission to contribute to the joint work of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council for the benefit of countries now in post-conflict situations. We promote the revitalization and strengthening of the General Assembly as the only universal body with enough legitimacy to debate and adopt policies, as prescribed by the Charter and as agreed in the Millennium Declaration and at the 2005 Summit.

We reiterate our strong support for the Economic and Social Council as a meeting place to foster sustainable development. We especially applaud the decision to convene a high-level meeting on development cooperation every two years. We add our voices to all the others urging an end to the stalemate in the discussions on Security Council reform. The parameters of that debate are well known. For our part, we have historically favoured a moderate expansion in the number of non-permanent members, but more recently, we have signalled that we could support any formula that would be capable of bringing about a consensus, including the expansion of members in both categories. We also support a more representative, transparent and effective Council.

We are candidates for a non-permanent seat on the Council for the biennium 2007-2008, because we believe that our experience as a country that made the transition from conflict to peace and democracy provides us with insights that would contribute to the work of the Council. In addition, we are one of the few original signatories of the Charter that have not yet had the opportunity to serve in the work of that body. If elected to the Security Council, we commit ourselves to carrying out our responsibilities in a professional, responsible and dignified manner — in the representation of our region — and also to promote from within the reform of that crucial forum for assuring peace and stability in the world.

My country's foreign policy is in accordance with our national interests based on improved participation by Guatemala in the globalized world, as well as the strengthening of multilateralism and regional integration. We have promoted a deeper integration with our immediate neighbours in Central America, and important progress in the establishment of a customs union has been achieved. We, the five Central American countries, have also agreed on a free trade agreement with the United States of America, and in 2007, will begin negotiations on an association agreement with the European Union.

Moreover, my Government has endeavoured to deepen its bilateral relations with Belize, while at the same time seeking to find a definitive, just, equitable and honourable solution to the territorial dispute between our countries. Thus, on 7 September 2005, we signed, under the auspices of the Organization of American States, an Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and Confidence-Building Measures, which covers a wide range of subjects and will bring us closer. One of the tangible results of that effort has been a free trade agreement signed just a few months ago.

Guatemala participated actively in the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in this same Hall less than a week ago. In that context, we emphasize that attention to the situation of Guatemalan migrants is another priority of my Government. An essential element of the public policy on that subject is full respect for the human rights of all migrants, an element which will only be fulfilled when all States become parties to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

My Government is working with the recipient countries, in particular with the United States of America, to promote comprehensive migration reform that would include mechanisms to manage the supply of workers in the countries of origin and the demand for workers in the recipient countries. That would help regularize the situation of emigrants, whose contribution to the well-being of their communities is substantial, and would make it possible to overcome the great vulnerability of our population.

We feel solidarity with other countries that have endured under conflict situations. This is why we have taken part in an increasing number of United Nations

peacekeeping operations. We are proud of our presence, along with many other Latin American countries, in our neighbour Haiti, and we celebrate the democratically elected Government of President René Préval. We also have troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and military observers in six other countries in the African continent.

We deplore the violence that has affected several countries in the Middle East, in particular Lebanon. We call for a solution that will allow Israel and a sovereign Palestinian State to live in peace within safe borders in the wider context of a region that finds its own destiny in harmony and progress.

Given the importance of coordination among States of the region, Guatemala organized, from 11 to 13 September 2006, the first regional security meeting of Central America and the Dominican Republic, with the goal of achieving a consensus among the countries of the Central American group, as well as Mexico, Colombia, Belize and the Dominican Republic, to develop a comprehensive strategy and to counteract the main threats to the area, a consensus to unify the security policies and procedures already agreed and contained in multilateral regional and international agreements, treaties and conventions, as well as those adopted at summit meetings. We hope we can continue to count on the support of the international community and of the United Nations to organize three more meetings to complete the development of that strategy.

It is important to emphasize that Guatemala is organizing, jointly with Transparency International, the 12th International Anti-Corruption Conference, from 15 to 18 November this year. The theme for the conference will be "Towards a fairer world: Why is corruption still blocking the way?" This effort reflects my Government's firm commitment to fight the scourge of corruption that has corroded our institutions for many years and has prevented our citizens from making the transition to a more just country. On that note, you are all welcome, and we are eager to share our challenges, progress and difficulties in this common struggle.

Under your leadership, Madam President, at this session the General Assembly will have to address issues of great importance for humanity and for our Organization. Guatemala pledges to participate actively in the debates planned for this year. From this moment on, we offer you our full cooperation for the success of your presidency.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Kirchner (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Ms. Al-Khalifa, on your election as President of the General Assembly at this session, since I believe it is very significant that a woman has assumed that role, to promote gender equality, which is a goal both of my Government and of the United Nations.

On behalf of the Argentine Republic, we would also like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the work he carried out, and to renew our recognition of Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his role in action promoting peace, multilateralism and the fight against poverty.

We have come to the General Assembly in the firm belief that the revitalization of this forum of global representation is fundamental so that international law can be the instrument of rationality that will enable us to settle conflicts and combat the threats to peace.

The international conduct of the Argentine Republic is inspired by the values of representative democracy, respect for fundamental human rights and active defence of international peace and security. Those principles, shared by the vast majority of the

Argentine people, guide our administration and are the basis of our foreign policy decisions.

In the field of human rights, in 2003, after more than two decades of sustained democratic rule in Argentina, we experienced a true paradigm shift. In response to the mandates of the whole of society, the three powers of the State adopted, within their respective purviews, concurrent decisions against impunity, preserving memory, truth and justice and securing reparations.

The annulment by Congress of the laws that accorded impunity for State-sponsored crimes of terrorism, the ruling that those laws and pardons granted by the courts in our country were unconstitutional, and the reopening of over a thousand court proceedings for crimes against humanity — some of which have resulted in the conviction of those responsible — constitute landmarks of that shift. It is our conviction that democracy is strengthened with the simultaneous fight against impunity and promotion of full respect for the rule of law, without calling for revenge.

With that experience, we have, since the beginning of the reform of the United Nations system, strongly supported incorporating human rights into the hierarchy so as to raise the institutional level of their treatment to that already given to development and to the maintenance of international peace and security. That determination led us to establish the Human Rights Council, in whose creation Argentina participated actively.

The first steps of that body have been positive, having approved the text of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. That is an instrument of great significance for our country, as it defines a crime against humanity from which Argentina suffered massively in the past, at a high cost to our society. We have among us here today a representative of an organization that was extremely involved with that issue — one of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Mrs. Marta Vázquez, who is accompanying our delegation. We hope the General Assembly will adopt that very important instrument quickly, during this session.

Five years after the attacks that shocked this city and the world, we would like to firmly condemn the serious threat of global terrorism. Argentina considers all acts of terrorism against innocent civilians to be criminal and unjustifiable, and accepts no argument to justify such methods.

The Argentine people suffered two atrocious attacks in the 1990s against the Embassy of Israel and the headquarters of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina. We are still struggling, in spite of the time that has elapsed, to fully clarify the facts and punish the culprits. We believe that, in order to face this criminal threat successfully, we must carry out a sustained multilateral and legitimate response. Respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and refugee law is essential, as are international cooperation and legal assistance to effectively enforce the norms against terrorism.

If, in facing down global terrorism, we resort to a global violation of human rights, the only winner in this fight shall be terrorism. We will advance firmly in the fight against terrorism only if we frame it within respect for local laws and international norms and conventions. No complication can be an excuse for not combating terrorism within the law.

Peace is built and maintained by understanding the true concept of solidarity among nations from a wider perspective than the purely military or the predominantly unilateral. Nations big and small, rich and poor, will be markedly vulnerable if we fail to grasp that the fight against terrorism demands sustained multilateral, intelligent action firmly based in legitimacy, respect for fundamental rights, proportionality of response and the support of international public opinion.

We would like to express our concern regarding the hostilities on the border between Israel and Lebanon, resulting in hundreds of casualties, severe damage to the civilian infrastructure and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. The violence must stop. We need to address the causes at the heart of the crisis, avoid the disproportionate use of force, and understand that only negotiated political solutions can hold in the long term. Argentina will continue to support a fair solution to the Middle East problems within the framework of resolution 1701 (2006).

We must understand that the world will move closer to peace only insofar as it promotes equality and struggles to eradicate poverty and exclusion. That is true both for the global system and for each country nationally.

Argentina supports the building of societies that are fairer, more equitable and with a better distribution of the benefits of economic growth. We also believe that each country has the right to search for its own development model with no external conditionalities. We not only aspire to generate sustainable growth; we also want it to reach everyone. There must be harmonized growth that translates into a balanced income distribution, because we know that what is needed is not development for a mere few, but the development of the whole country.

In the region and in the Common Market of the South, we want an efficient instrument to address poverty and exclusion; we want the common good to prevail over sectarian interests and to overcome stagnation and the technology gap; and we want to define a sustainable and productive development model that valorizes our competitive advantages and fosters our vast wealth in human and material resources.

The economic situation of the Republic is very different from what it was when our Administration began. We are achieving true structural change. That includes uninterrupted growth at rates of between 8 and 9 per cent; the growing participation of investment in the gross domestic product; record local savings rates; the resurrection of local industry; a fiscal surplus at historic levels; a clear expansion of our industrial sales to the world; the systematic decrease of local and external public debt; the preventive accumulation of reserves; lesser external exposure; a marked drop in unemployment; a strengthening of the income of wage earners and retirees; and a significant fall of poverty and destitution levels.

With a prudent monetary policy, an orderly fiscal policy, a fiscal and commercial surplus, and a responsible management of indebtedness, we are increasingly reducing the vulnerability and uncertainty that characterized the Argentine economy in the past. Decent work, social inclusion, national production, internal consumption and sustained growth have allowed us to fulfil the goals of the Millennium Declaration, although there is still a long way to go to recover from the hell into which we had fallen.

We seek the integral sustainability of that process, not only in its macroeconomic aspects, but also guaranteeing social equity and a fairer distribution of income through the reduction of poverty and unemployment.

In implementing a national education plan with a strong federal emphasis that highlights the challenge of improving the quality of education, ensures the growing funding of the public sector, and interacts with the private sector, we seek also to achieve its strategic sustainability.

We cannot but point out that these achievements have not been supported by the International Monetary Fund, which has denied us any kind of aid, and, it must be said, that they are in many cases the result of ignoring or even contradicting its recommendations and conditionalities. We have sufficient empirical proof of the failure of international financial organizations in the promotion of development in less developed countries. In many cases, their conditionalities have actually had the opposite effect, hindering development.

The world has changed and those organizations have not. They still insist on jeopardizing advancement with their misguided interference. That is why we support, together with most countries, the reform of the international financial architecture to make it more effectual in assisting the progress of nations with fewer resources. In noting the reluctance of international financial organizations to effect any real change in their policies, we feel it necessary to endorse such change and to consider the creation of new international financial instruments that would allow us to fund development projects to fight poverty and hunger in the world and generate true options for progress.

Argentina is distressed to note the stagnation in the negotiations of the Doha Round for the development of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is imperative, within the current globalization process — from which developing countries must profit — to reach a successful and balanced result fully consistent with the mandate of the Doha Declaration. Thus, we reaffirm the need to reach a satisfactory result in agriculture in this WTO round, including a substantial reduction in domestic subsidies, the elimination of export subsidies and ample access to the markets of developed countries.

We are increasingly concerned to see the deterioration of the global environment. We affirm that there can be no double standards. The environment must be protected in developed and in developing countries, in rich countries and in poor, in the countries

of the North and of the South, in the central and in the peripheral countries.

In developing their industries, the more industrialized countries have profited from a true environmental subsidy from the rest of the countries which today compromise, in their relative backwardness, a true world environmental reserve. That is why we cannot accept that those countries that have achieved greater development — often at the expense of the degradation of the environment and by producing a severe global effect evident in climate change — should seek to transfer to us the more contaminating part of their industrial processes.

There can be no reliable solutions without the concerted action of all countries of the world, insofar as the nature of the problem is of a global scale. It is unacceptable for the claims of the developing States to go unnoticed. It is imperative to take the path of solutions.

Our countries wish to receive investments and present profitable opportunities in the energy, transportation and infrastructure fields, and even in sensitive sectors. Therein lies a strong foundation for international collaboration, but we do not want investors to undertake activities in our countries that are prohibited in the industrialized countries just so that they can improve the profits of shareholders by creating the illusion of an allegedly less expensive product by raising the costs of environmental pollution, deteriorating health conditions and lowered life expectancy.

On a different subject, we attach high importance to our participation, together with other countries of the region, in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. In our view, beyond the progress achieved in the transition, the steady support and economic assistance of the international community will continue to be critical in the areas of security, the strengthening of institutions, the fostering of political dialogue, the protection of human rights, social inclusion, the promotion of the rule of law, the creation of administrative capacity and, above all, the promotion of economic and social development through concrete contributions.

We reiterate here our will to achieve peaceful nuclear development under the verification of international organizations. Argentina's commitment to disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, our adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and our long-standing practice in the field are known to all.

In conclusion, I wish to recall that the question of the Malvinas Islands — which includes the Malvinas, the South Georgias, the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime area — has been under consideration by the United Nations since 1965. The General Assembly and its Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization have defined this as a special case that differs from traditional colonial situations in that it involves a sovereignty dispute that must be resolved through bilateral negotiations between my country and the United Kingdom, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2065 (XX) and other relevant resolutions.

We must stress that the Government of the United Kingdom persists in ignoring those General Assembly resolutions. Nonetheless, I would like to reaffirm once again my country's readiness to engage in constructive dialogue with the United Kingdom. We call upon the United Kingdom to promptly heed the request of the international community to resume negotiations.

In conclusion, we are firmly convinced that the basis exists for international cooperation that can help the world move towards peace. The tensions and difficulties besetting humanity must not prevent us from understanding the extent to which the authoritarian notion that military might can provide unilateral solutions to conflicts and threats is starting to recede. That mistaken belief has led only to failure and great suffering.

Only multilateral solutions, reached through the arduous process of negotiation, despite their limitations, can move us forward. In this context, the United Nations has a fundamental role to play in ensuring greater understanding among nations with a view to creating a safe, peaceful and fairer world in the years to come.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: Let me begin my statement by echoing the sentiments of those who have congratulated you, Madam on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, as well as of those who have expressed their appreciation for the manner in which your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, successfully conducted the business of the sixtieth session. In the same vein, I should also like to congratulate the Republic of Montenegro on its admission to the United Nations family.

I also wish to pay special tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his vision and exemplary leadership of the United Nations over the past 10 years. We commend him for his tireless efforts to assist Member States in transforming the United Nations into a dynamic, relevant and effective instrument for meeting challenges that confront us as we try to make the world a better place for everyone.

The achievements of the Secretary-General, especially in the area of the promotion of peace and development — notable among them the Millennium Summit in 2000 and the review Summit held last year — will always be remembered as historic because of the important decisions that we made on both occasions. As he nears the end of his tenure of his high Office, we wish him the best in his future endeavours and hope that he will be available to serve the international community wherever he may be needed.

The theme for our debate this year — implementation of the global partnership for development as a follow-up to the 2005 World Summit — is very appropriate. We acknowledged last year that fighting poverty was a collective undertaking. Together, we recognized that mobilizing financial resources for development is central to a global partnership for development in support of the implementation of internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

For many years now, the international community has acknowledged the need for accelerated economic development in Africa. There have been many initiatives and programmes of action aimed at achieving that objective. Indeed, the history of the United Nations in the past three decades is littered with well-meaning initiatives, many of which unfortunately never made the transition from theory to practical implementation.

We have agreed on goals and set targets for ourselves in our quest to meet our economic and social development challenges. Given this impressive array of initiatives, it is curious and ironic that the aggregate economic performance of our countries has not made a difference in the lives of the majority of our people.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

One explanation for our development predicament and the many failed initiatives is the wide gap between rhetoric and concrete action on the ground. We have on many occasions agreed on making available the means of implementing agreed goals. We have set targets for making those resources available. Yet, at the same time, we have witnessed some countries and groups taking concerted action, such as illegal economic sanctions, to frustrate our development efforts.

In the case of Zimbabwe, those countries have blocked balance of payments support and other types of assistance from the international financial institutions that they control. Following the heroic and successful efforts of the people of Zimbabwe to clear requisite arrears to the International Monetary Fund, those negative forces have manipulated decision-making at that institution so as to deny us any new support. They have even tried to restrict investment inflows, all on account of political differences between them and us.

Is it not a paradox that, while we are denied resources for development, funding is readily made available to support elements bent on subverting the democratically expressed will of the majority of our citizens and to unconstitutionally effect regime change? We condemn such interference in our domestic

affairs. Let me repeat what I have said before: regime change in Zimbabwe — as, indeed, in any other country — is a right of the people of that country; it can never be a right of people of other countries. The golden key to regime change is in the hands of the people of Zimbabwe and is very well guarded. No one from Washington or London has the right to that key; it is our key and ours alone.

Let it also not be forgotten that those who want regime change are the very same people whom we fought yesterday. They represent British colonialism and imperialism. We spent many years in jail; I spent 11 years in jail. Then we went into exile in order to muster the military strength needed to overthrow colonialism. Many of our people died in the process. Many were killed by the British regime headed by Ian Smith. Finally, our people were victorious. On 18 April 1980, a representative of the royal family, Prince Charles, was sent to lower the British flag. I was there to hoist the flag of independence, which today represents the full sovereignty of the people of Zimbabwe, never again to be lost. Never again shall Zimbabwe become a colony.

And so, these manoeuvres and manipulations continue, and my Government is well aware of them and is well guarded. At every turn, we will take the steps necessary to protect our sovereignty, defend our people and defend our right to continue to ensure that that sovereignty reposes in the hands of the Zimbabwean people. From this rostrum, I want to warn that any attempt to change that mandate through unconstitutional means, by agents sent to undertake a process that we regard as illegal, will meet with the full wrath of the law.

It is for that reason that we welcome this debate, which seeks to address the yawning gap between agreed action plans and implementation, and between rhetoric and what actually happens on the ground. We fully acknowledge that national Governments shoulder the primary responsibility for implementing their development plans, including achieving the MDGs. However, it is absolutely necessary that our efforts at the national level — including adopting and implementing correct and relevant programmes — be supported, not hampered by a lack of international cooperation. This session, therefore, would be of great value if agreement were to be reached on financing for development, including the establishment of mechanisms to measure aid flows. Such financing, if it is to have a meaningful impact, should be adequate, predictable and consistent.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to cause untold havoc in Africa — particularly Southern Africa — owing to high levels of poverty, which make it difficult for the affected people to gain access to medication. Zimbabwe welcomes the continuing efforts by the international community of nations to find lasting solutions to the scourge of HIV/AIDS. We urge the donor community, in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, to assist in scaling up access to affordable essential drugs, particularly for developing countries.

The tendency to use assistance in the fight against HIV/AIDS as a reward for political compliance and malleability is one that the United Nations should condemn. Given the fact that the pandemic does not respect borders, the denial of assistance to countries on political grounds, through a self-serving and selective approach, will do more harm and weaken international efforts to fight the pandemic. For example, in my country, a Zimbabwean AIDS patient receives, on average, approximately $4 per year in international assistance, compared with an average of approximately $172 per year for other countries in the region. However, even against that background, my Government has registered some modest success in reducing the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate from approximately 29 per cent in 2000 to 18.1 percent in 2006, on the strength of its own resources and programmes.

While we do not dispute the inevitability of migration, the problem of the brain drain is of great concern to my Government and, indeed, to other developing countries. The brain drain has proved to be a handicap to sustainable development. If it is not addressed now, the chances that developing countries will achieve the MDGs by 2015 are minimal. While developing countries are losing skilled manpower through migration, the benefits associated with migrant remittances are far less than the cost of developing human resources and skills. We need to develop solutions that give due recognition and respect to the investments made by Governments in human resources and in developing the skills of citizens, as well as to the human rights of migrants.

While official development assistance is desirable, what developing countries need more is an

open, rules-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. If developing countries are to realize the full potential of international trade to enhance economic growth, it is essential that the main barriers to their exports be removed. In that regard, we are concerned that tariffs have remained high on goods — such as textiles and farm products — that are strategically important to developing economies. Much could be done with the right partnerships and with fair terms of trade. We share the view that the implementation of the development aspects of the Doha Work Programme will go a long way towards assisting developing countries to compete in this global village. It is therefore disturbing that there has been no progress in breaking the deadlock on the Doha Round of international trade negotiations. The failure of multilateral negotiations will give rise to bilateral arrangements that are inimical to fair trade. We cannot help but suspect that the breakdown was deliberately engineered in order to perpetuate the status quo that favours one group of countries at the expense of another.

The United Nations is uniquely placed to provide the framework for international cooperation. There is consensus that the United Nations should play a fundamental and central role in the promotion of international cooperation for development. In that regard, it is important that coherence and coordination be enhanced, as agreed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. At the country level, the United Nations system should be effectively coordinated in order to support national efforts in poverty reduction and sustainable development.

While my Government applauds the United Nations continuing efforts to elaborate a convention on terrorism, we urge Member States to guard against a situation in which established international conventions are ignored and resolutions of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies on that issue are disregarded. In our attempt to deal with the scourge of terrorism, it is also necessary to address the underlying causes of that phenomenon. To demonstrate its commitment to fighting terrorism, the Parliament of Zimbabwe has come up with the Suppression of Foreign and International Terrorism Bill, which seeks to fight foreign and international terrorism, as well as mercenary activities.

The recent developments in the Middle East are a cause of great concern. We condemn the disproportionate use of force by Israel in Gaza and Lebanon and the detention of elected Palestinian members of Parliament and ministers. We firmly reject the collective punishment of the Palestinian and Lebanese people and the intrusion into their territories in violation of international law. We call upon the international community, particularly the Security Council and the Quartet, to make every effort to ensure that the brokered ceasefire continues to hold.

It is sad that the Security Council dithered and failed to take timely action to stop the massacres and wanton destruction of civilian infrastructure in Lebanon, all because of the misguided national interests of one super-Power. The status quo in the Council, where a few powerful countries hold the world to ransom, is no longer tenable. There is therefore a strong case here for addressing the core issue of the democratization of international governance. Africa remains the only continent that does not have a permanent seat with veto power in the Security Council. That situation is unacceptable. It needs to be corrected and corrected now. The position of the African Union on that issue is very clear. Africa demands two permanent seats, complete with veto power — if the veto power is to continue — plus two additional non-permanent seats. We will not compromise on this matter until our concerns are adequately addressed.

Those who take objection to that are perhaps States that would want to remain in the position in which they are considered to be superior to everyone else. There cannot be superiority under the Charter of the United Nations, which recognizes the equality of nations. We are all equal under that Charter, and that principle has got to be recognized, but it would appear that some countries that have amassed military power over time consider themselves to be superior to all the others because they have that muscle of power. But the muscle of power is not the consideration that we take into account in judging the worth of nations. The Charter of the United Nations has got to be taken into account, and who knows whether the Goliath of today may tomorrow not be the same. Anyway, every Goliath has his own David.

In many parts of Africa, the dawn of an unprecedented era of peace and tranquillity has allowed us to refocus our attention and resources towards economic development. There can be no better time than now for the international community to

augment our own efforts to bring home to our people the peace dividend we have so patiently waited for. We therefore call on the international community to renew its solidarity with Africa through tangible support in the form of increased resources, decisive debt relief, as well as new and additional financial resources for investment and growth.

Let me conclude by reiterating the fact that the future of the international community is best served by an international order that is based on strengthening multilateralism and thereby destroying the present unipolar system. It is our conviction that only through a multilateral approach can we achieve peace and development. For us to successfully tackle the challenges that we face, there is a need for more than just pious expressions of solidarity. Together as global partners in development, we can guarantee a prosperous future for generations to come. Such a partnership should be based on the principle of the sovereign equality of nations and on mutual benefit. That is the path we should strive to follow.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fernández Reyna (*spoke in Spanish*): I am greatly honoured to congratulate Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain upon her election, the first woman from the Middle East, to preside over the work of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. She has the great responsibility to promote dialogue and harmony in the midst of the spread of conflict throughout the world. Likewise, we wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his ten years at the head of this Organization and for his immense efforts to promote peacekeeping, security and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the interest of continuity in the pursuit of United Nations reform, so notably promoted by the Secretary-General, our country wishes to reiterate its conviction that any reform must provide for greater democratization. We recognize the unquestionable accomplishments achieved during this process, such as the creation of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Notwithstanding, reform will be incomplete if it does not include reform of the Security Council, the body specifically responsible for taking political decisions within this Organization. It is our conviction that the Security Council must be expanded to make it more diverse and participatory, with the aim of ensuring more equitable regional representation and taking into account the regional and national interests that prevail in today's world. There is also a need for closer cooperation between the Security Council and other important United Nations bodies, such as the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

One of the global issues of great concern to the Dominican Republic and other parts of the world is that of human security. We have observed with great consternation that there has recently been an erosion of domestic security in countries, leading to increased violence and criminality. That situation has, without a doubt, been fuelled by a combination of factors, among them drug trafficking, the illicit traffic of arms, the trafficking of persons and other criminal activities. In addressing this dramatic situation, which is driving some populations to desperation, the Dominican Republic remains vigilant in the continuous struggle and urges the international community to strengthen control and prevention mechanisms that are needed to meet these modern challenges that only increase fear and desperation among defenceless civilian populations.

Another issue of great importance for the progress and well-being of our countries is the relationship between migration and sustainable

development, which constitutes the main item on the General Assembly's agenda. We believe that the phenomenon of migration is positively linked to the cause of development. However, there is an inherent contradiction in this modern, globalized world in that we promote the free flow of merchandise, capital and services, while we restrict the free flow of human labour.

Although each State exercises its sovereign right in implementing its migration policies, it is our conviction that the asymmetry currently existing between the free flow of production inputs and the restricted flow of persons will have to cease to exist over time. According to the conservative voices in the developed world, migration is a sort of invasion from the underdeveloped countries to the most developed countries. It is also considered to be an act of revenge for the territorial expropriation that took place in the colonial era and is seen as a threat to their current way of life.

This is a fallacy. Migration is not about the poor invading the developed countries, nor is it a threat to their current way of life. Frankly speaking, migration is one of the historical means used by human beings and to which they continue to resort to in order to achieve greater well-being, liberty and justice. As it will be impossible to do away with this phenomenon, we can only seek to control it in a legal and organized fashion, in a framework of respect for the human rights and dignity of all persons. In the meantime, many people could benefit from this situation, through remittances, the creation of networks of contacts and cooperation, capacity-building in human resources, technology transfer and diverse forms of collaboration and exchange.

In another regard, the serious events that recently took place in the Middle East have filled us with alarm and consternation. They are a dramatic reminder that tensions affecting the peace of entire regions still persist. As with other conflicts, the dispute between Israel and its neighbours can be resolved only through dialogue and the good offices of the United Nations, which recently achieved the cessation of hostilities between the two disputing parties. We are confident that a definitive peace will prevail in this region and allow the development of enhanced levels of understanding, tolerance, and co-existence among its inhabitants.

The Dominican Republic maintains its interest in participating in the promotion of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. We reiterate our deep commitment to the activities and objectives of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). We consider them suitable for the advancement and dignity of all the women of the world and, in particular, the women of countries such as the Dominican Republic. As the host country, we warmly appreciate the support of Member States to INSTRAW.

The Dominican Republic is deeply committed to re-establishing stability in Haiti, and we applaud the recent decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for six months. The Dominican Republic has special interest that there be an increase of international cooperation aimed at preserving the pace of the reconstruction process of this sister nation. With regard to our two countries, our warm relations are also expressed through the Dominican-Haitian Joint Commission, a forum which our Governments are reviving because we recognize it as the most appropriate mechanism for discussion and for reaching agreements on many topics of shared concern.

In conclusion, we wish to see the United Nations renew and strengthen itself with a view to playing a more active, dynamic and effective role — one that would guarantee the realization of the values and principles enshrined in the San Francisco Charter, so as to ensure that peace on Earth will become the daily form of existence among human beings.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Dominican Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yayi (*spoke in French*): I am taking part personally in this session of the General Assembly in order to reiterate Benin's commitment to the noble purposes and principles of the United Nations, and to express the readiness of the Beninese delegation to cooperate and contribute, as best it can, to the success of these deliberations.

But first, allow me, to once again warmly congratulate Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, and to express our appreciation for the remarkable way in which she guided the work of the High-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

I also wish to pay tribute to the remarkable efforts of her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden, who had the weighty task of leading the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, which was focused, essentially, on the implementation of the major decisions taken at the 2005 World Summit.

Allow me to pay a resounding tribute to my friend Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who over the past 10 years has wisely and skilfully led our Organization at a time of new challenges and threats created by changes unprecedented in the history of humanity.

My country, Benin, believes that the future Secretary-General should come from the continent of Asia. We hope that the new Secretary-General will be able to take the measures necessary to lead the Organization towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

I am pleased to note that the Assembly is already progressing in the preparation of this great endeavour: the promotion of development is the key issue for the general debate at the sixty-first session, focusing in accordance with Ms. Al-Khalifa's proposal, on the establishment of a global partnership for development. My country, the Republic of Benin, joins in this debate with the conviction that we will make significant progress in finding pragmatic ways of fulfilling the commitments that have been adopted on many occasions, for the promotion of economic and social development throughout the world.

The question of development is at the heart of the mission of the United Nations. In the Charter, Members proclaimed their belief in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. They made the commitment to use international institutions in order to encourage economic and social progress for all people.

Hence, reform of the United Nations, if it is to be viable and effective, must also help ensure that our Organization can do better as a framework and an instrument for development through the promotion of the well-being of the poorest of our planet, ensuring the economic growth of the most vulnerable members of the community of nations, in particular the least developed countries.

Financing for development is a factor on which genuine partnership needs to be built between donor countries and developing countries. In this context, the Monterrey Consensus, as members know, continues to be relevant. It is good to note that some donor countries have achieved the objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance (ODA) for developing countries, with 0.2 per cent earmarked for least developed countries. It is also important to encourage those who have already established a specific timetable for achieving those objectives. Given the inadequacy of official development assistance, it is important to examine new sources of financing for development activities, and some are already doing so. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the proposals that have been made by some countries, such as the French Republic and President Jacques Chirac.

Identifying new sources of financing thus deserves special attention. We are pleased that mobilizing the remittances of migrant workers can in some respects also contribute to development action. Nonetheless, it is important to facilitate those transfers so that they can effectively contribute to improving the living conditions of the beneficiary populations and their impact on poverty reduction can be maximized. But it should be stressed that the resources that come from remittances by migrant workers cannot be

considered part of ODA and should not be included in ODA calculations.

We must also mobilize resources through microcredits for the poorest sectors. The support of the international community should contribute to strengthening microcredit systems, which could be extremely useful in the context of efforts to counteract unemployment among young people and to promote the empowerment of women in order to improve their living conditions and enhance their contribution to the national income of the countries concerned.

We must ensure the full insertion of developing countries, particularly the least advanced, into international trade so that they can be sure that, through that mechanism appropriate resources for financing their development are mobilized. Here we express our disappointment at the failure of the multilateral trade negotiations in the framework of the Doha Round. Among other reasons, they floundered because of the crucial question of agricultural subsidies, which are stifling the producers in developing countries. My country, Benin, will continue to work with other affected countries to ensure the abolition of those subsidies, or at least to get compensations equal to the harm we suffer.

In order to promote development, our countries are seeking to implement democratic reforms. However, as I said at the opening session of the meeting of the least developed countries, any democracy that does not go hand in hand with development is doomed to fail. Also, our efforts to promote development will not bear fruit if we do not succeed in maintaining peace in our own countries and throughout the world.

That is why in 2005 Benin, while it was on the Security Council, sought to contribute to the efforts to enhance the effectiveness of that body in preventing armed conflicts. We welcome the Secretary-General's prompt action through the inspired and wise recommendations he recently submitted on questions related to the prevention of conflicts. Resolving various conflicts enables the affected developing countries to resolutely get themselves back on the track of reconstruction and national development.

From this rostrum, my country pays tribute to the decisive action being taken by the United Nations in the area of peacekeeping, and we repeat that we are willing to contribute actively to it. The Government of Benin is ready to continue participating in peacekeeping operations in order to allow peoples affected by armed conflicts to overcome them and to create the conditions for stability that are necessary to ensure the reconstruction of their countries and their economic and social development.

For us in Benin, another word for peace is development. This is the message that I wished to bring, on behalf of the people of Benin and of the least developed countries, during this general debate.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Benin for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (spoke in French): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kikwete: Permit me to begin by congratulating Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her well deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. This is an important milestone on the gender agenda of the United Nations. I wish her great success and assure her of Tanzania's full support and cooperation as she discharges her duties.

I would also like to commend her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his able stewardship of the Assembly's sixtieth session. Under his leadership, Tanzania was privileged to co-chair, with Denmark, negotiations that led to the operationalization of the Peacebuilding Commission.

I stand before this Assembly as the fourth President of my country, Tanzania, following another successful democratic election last year. This is the third smooth transition of power in Tanzania. I took over from my eminent predecessor in office, His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa, who has remained active both at home and abroad. He remains my useful and wise counsel, as does his predecessor His Excellency Ali Hassan Mwinyi. Among the many functions that former President Mkapa continues to discharge for our country and the human family as a whole is his membership in the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-Wide Coherence, which is an important task on our agenda for the reform of the United Nations.

Such was the success of the previous administration that I can only come before you with one central message — a message of policy continuity, nationally, regionally and internationally.

We will continue the efforts of the previous administration to promote peace, stability and national unity. In addition, we shall redouble our efforts to uphold and strengthen good democratic governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and intensify the fight against corruption. We feel greatly honoured in this regard that the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption decided to hold its second global conference in Arusha in two days' time, in recognition and support of our efforts.

Tanzania also made impressive economic strides, making it one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. I intend to sustain and enhance that record with greater zeal, vigour and speed.

Similarly, Tanzania has emerged as one of the best-practice cases in terms of ownership of the development agenda and the harmonization and coordination of development assistance. I will advance this policy and practice during my tenure in the hope that it will contribute to the realization of the theme of this General Assembly: the implementation of a global partnership for development.

In view of this record, and given our political and macro-economic stability and political will, Tanzania is now well poised to accelerate the pace towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. For this to happen, however, we need international support to upgrade our infrastructure and build capacity for value-addition processes and human resource development. Fortunately, the framework for such international support already exists, for example through the Monterrey Consensus. I believe Tanzania has lived up to its commitment under the Global Compact for development. I now call upon our development partners to do likewise.

Cognizant of the role of the private sector as the engine of growth in Tanzania, we have implemented far-reaching policies and institutional reforms geared to creating an environment conducive to the thriving of private business.

The World Bank's "Doing Business 2007" report recognizes Tanzania as one of the top-ten best reforming countries in the world. That means that Tanzania has again fulfilled its commitments under the Global Compact. We therefore call upon our development partners to buttress our efforts and assist the private sector in responding positively.

The success of whatever we try to do nationally depends critically on a peaceful neighbourhood. For too long, Tanzania has suffered from the consequences of conflict and instability in the Great Lakes region, including hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees and the destruction of infrastructure and the environment, and in terms of time and resources deployed in facilitating conflict resolution. For this reason, Tanzania will continue to play its part in the quest for peace, security, stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

Significant progress has been achieved in the political and security situation in the Great Lakes region. We appreciate the support of the United Nations and other partners in the regional peace processes. Tanzania welcomes and commends the Government of Burundi and the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération rebel group for finally signing the ceasefire agreement. We are humbled that we could be given an opportunity to make our contribution. We promise to continue to be useful in whatever way may be required.

Likewise, I commend the Government, the major political actors and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for holding the long-awaited elections. We urge that the forthcoming second round of elections be conducted in a free, fair and peaceful manner. Tanzania, as Chair of the Southern African Development Community Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, will play its role in support of this

process. As a friendly neighbour, we will endeavour to be as useful as is necessary.

Moreover, Tanzania, as current chair of the Initiative for Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region, will continue to work closely with other members to ensure a successful Second International Conference on the Great Lakes Region later this year in Nairobi.

I wish to put on record our sincere gratitude to the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region for their support. I appeal to them and the international community to remain engaged with this process.

Peace seems to have eluded the world. Reports of wars and violent conflicts are headline news in most of our media. Unfortunately Africa, the poorest of the continents, has had an unfair share of conflict. Like other delegates, we express our concern for the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, and call for continued engagement at the regional level and by the international community. Likewise, we are deeply concerned about the situation in Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere on the continent.

The continuing impasse on the issue of the Western Sahara is unfortunate. After 31 years, it is high time that the United Nations redouble its efforts to resolve this matter. The United Nations resolved the question of East Timor, which has a lot of similarities to that of the Saharans. The people of Western Sahara deserve no less from their United Nations. I believe it could be done if all parties played their part appropriately.

Turning to the situation in the Middle East, I am pleased to see the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon holding, and troop contributing countries responding positively in reinforcing the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

The 34-day war in Lebanon took international attention away from the plight of the Palestinian people. The lack of progress towards a negotiated two-State solution and the decline in confidence in the peace process are worrying developments. We call upon the Quartet, and encourage bilateral and other multilateral initiatives, to revive the peace process laid down in the road map. A just, viable, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East can come only through negotiations, and no other way.

Tanzania welcomes and applauds the adoption by the General Assembly of a comprehensive Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). It is our expectation that the differences that arose during the negotiations will not stand in the way of the Strategy's implementation. After experiencing a major terrorist attack on our soil in 1998, Tanzania has always repeated its resolve to cooperate with others to combat terrorism in all its manifestations. The threat of terrorism is global and complex; it demands our collective efforts and an adaptive strategy to contain it. Thank God we already have that strategy — let us implement it.

Tanzania has always stood for the sovereign equality of nations and for the primacy of multilateralism in global governance and in addressing global issues. We have always cherished and stood for the central role of the United Nations in global affairs. We promise to continue to be faithful and responsible members of the United Nations. It is now our intention to participate more actively in United Nations peacekeeping missions and operations.

We have always believed that the United Nations of today has to reflect, in its structure, policies, programmes and activities, the realities of the world of today, not that of sixty years ago. The United Nations has to move with the changing times and aspirations of its membership. I want to reaffirm Tanzania's continued commitment to these urgent and legitimate demands. We are very much committed to the reform agenda of the United Nations, especially reform of the Security Council to make it more representative and more responsive to changing realities.

Tanzania's term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council will end in three months. I would like to thank all members for having accorded my country the honour of serving in that very important United Nations organ. We thank our fellow Council members for their cooperation and support during our term of office. As we prepare to leave the Council, we are gratified that we were able to organize a special Council meeting to discuss the situation in the Great Lakes region at which useful conclusions and decisions were made.

As we prepare to leave the Council, we are also gratified that we have taken note of the feeling in the Council of the need to reform that body. Let us pluck up courage and take the bull by the horns.

Allow me to pay special tribute to our outgoing, illustrious Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan — a great internationalist and a great statesman. We congratulate him for a job well done and for his able leadership during a particularly difficult period for the world, for the United Nations and for him, personally. He will be remembered as one who challenged the Organization to live up to the true promise of multilateralism, through delivering collective security, pursuing fundamental human rights and the rule of law and promoting human development. We thank him and wish him the best of luck on his retirement. I hope that he will be given time to retire.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pohamba: I should like at the outset to congratulate Ms. Al-Khalifa on her well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty first session. I am confident that, given her wisdom and experience, she will steer the proceedings of the Assembly successfully. I also express our profound appreciation to her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden, for his excellent work during the sixtieth session.

In the same vein, we salute the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedication and commitment to the work of the United Nations. My delegation would like to pay him special tribute for his distinguished leadership and remarkable contribution to the United Nations, taking into consideration his imminent departure at the end of a long, dedicated and brilliant career in the service of our Organization. Under his leadership, the United Nations has recorded significant achievements. He ably laid the foundation for Member States to make further progress, especially with regard to the reform of the United Nations. We will carry on with this task, bearing in mind his vision of sustained global cooperation among States. Allow me to wish him the very best in his future engagements.

We are gathered here to reaffirm our faith in the United Nations and to recommit ourselves to the purposes and principles of the Charter. Today, the world needs a stronger United Nations and effective multilateralism that reflects current realities. Only thus will humanity be able to respond in a timely manner and without hesitation to the global challenges that we face.

We fully support the comprehensive reform of the United Nations as proposed by the Secretary-General. The reforms should aim at strengthening the Organization and making it more efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of all its Members. We further attach great importance to strengthening the role and authority of the General Assembly as the main deliberative and policy-making body, whose relationship with other principal organs should be placed in a fitting context so as to ensure cooperation and respect for their roles as provided for in the Charter.

My Government believes that the reform of the Security Council, including its expansion, is essential. The African continent deserves to be fairly and equitably represented in the Council. That is not too much to ask.

During the World Summit in September last year, we reaffirmed our commitment to the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), adopted more than six years ago. The Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) reiterated our commitments to the implementation of the decisions made during previous conferences and summits. My Government appreciates the work done under the guidance and able leadership of former President Eliasson in the realization of the Summit decisions.

The fruits of those efforts are visible to us all, as they culminated in the inauguration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the creation of the Human Rights Council, the creation of the Central Emergency Response Fund and the establishment of the Ethics Office. We also welcome the accomplishments in the area of management reform. People around the world have high hopes that these newly created instruments will achieve the specific mandates set for them. We therefore encourage all Member States to continue, in an open and transparent manner, to finalize the review of the process.

Namibia attaches importance to the global development agenda. Thus we are concerned about the slow pace at which this essential matter is being handled and about the lack of adherence to the commitments in line with the Millennium Declaration. In this regard, I urge all fellow leaders to stand together in finding effective solutions to push back the ever-encroaching frontiers of poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance.

The African people know that they must take a lead in resolving problems and challenges on the continent. In those endeavours, they need to form effective partnerships with the international community. I therefore welcome the commitments made by the Group and Eight last year in Scotland to consider increasing development aid to Africa, to cancel the debt owed by the poorest countries and to promote universal access to antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS by the year 2010.

We reiterate our call for cooperation among the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the African Union and its subregional organizations dealing with economic and social development on the continent. We continue to emphasize the importance of the Economic and Social Council as a central intergovernmental body for promoting a more integrated approach to global peace and development.

Namibia welcomes the presidential and parliamentary elections recently held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which, most international observers agree, were conducted in a peaceful and transparent atmosphere. We urge the United Nations and the international community at large to continue to support the people of the Democratic Republic during this crucial democratic transition.

The situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan is cause for serious concern. The African Union, through the African Union Mission in Sudan and with the assistance of the international community, has made efforts to bring peace to that region under exceptionally hard conditions. We commend the African Union Special Envoy, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, for his tireless efforts in bringing the parties to an agreement. We urge all the parties to respect their commitments.

We welcome the visit to the Sudan by the United Nations Security Council team in June this year and the recommendations they made. Namibia looks forward to an urgent and smooth transition from the African Union Mission to a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Darfur in accordance with Security Council resolution 1706 (2006). We urge the Government of the Sudan and other parties concerned to accept this transition, which we believe will be in the best interest of the people of the Sudan in general and those of the Darfur region in particular.

I would like to join other countries around the world in expressing our concern about the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which remains a menace to humanity. The proliferation of such weapons compromises peace and security. They also pose serious challenges to law enforcement agencies around the world.

We are concerned that the question of Western Sahara remains unresolved. The inalienable rights of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence must be upheld and respected, as stipulated in the relevant United Nations resolutions. We therefore call for the urgent implementation of all relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, with the aim of holding a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara.

Namibia is also deeply concerned about the ongoing suffering of the people of Palestine. We wish to reaffirm our full and unequivocal support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and national independence. In this context, we appeal to the United Nations to assume its full responsibility by implementing all its resolutions and decisions on Palestine, with immediate effect and without precondition.

Sadly, the people of Lebanon have once again been subjected to war and indiscriminate bombing,

which have caused enormous suffering and the deaths of innocent people, including children and the elderly, as well as severe damage to and destruction of property and infrastructure. Against that background, we call for the immediate and unconditional implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and appeal to the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Lebanon in dealing with the resulting humanitarian crisis.

For many years now, the majority of Member States in this Assembly have expressed concern over the continuous economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which continues to cause severe hardships for the Cuban people. The Government of the Republic of Namibia upholds the principles of peaceful coexistence of nations and fair and open trade among nations. Thus, we call on all Member States, in conformity with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, for an immediate and unconditional lifting of the embargo against the Republic of Cuba, as called for in General Assembly resolution 60/12 and many previous resolutions.

In June 2006, the General Assembly convened a High-level Meeting on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. That Meeting served as an important opportunity for Member States to assess progress and further strengthen and expand responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Before the High-level Meeting, the African Union had adopted an African Common Position at a special session in Abuja in May 2006. Namibia is fully committed to the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. We are, equally, grateful for the support for the call to mobilize resources and to forge a stronger partnership in confronting the pandemic. We stress the need for universal and affordable access to comprehensive service packages for all those infected.

In our ongoing efforts to reform and strengthen the United Nations, making it more effective and responsive to today's challenges — poverty and hunger, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, civil wars and the war on terror — we should place human lives and human dignity at the centre of all our efforts. The reform we have embarked upon should be seen as a process and should be undertaken in a spirit of mutual understanding and with a sense of collective ownership. Let us strive to re-energize the United Nations and make it an Organization that we can all be proud of, so that we can make planet Earth a common home for all humanity to live in peace, stability and prosperity.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alfredo Palacio, President of the Republic of Ecuador

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Alfredo Palacio, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alfredo Palacio, President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Palacio (*spoke in Spanish*): The twenty-first century demands that the world develop a new vision of the concept of international law and of relations among peoples and States. A year ago, Ecuador raised the need to move towards a new world order built on three bases: the economy, international law and biology. This need has become urgent. We summon the planet to establish this new triad, which must include biology.

Never before has there been so much wealth. Poverty, however, continues to grow, and hunger and misery take their toll of human lives each day. Life on Earth is deteriorating. The harmonious continuity of humanity is threatened, and the world — including the developed countries — has not been able to find an adequate answer. There are still vast areas of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia where millions of human beings are on the brink of extinction. Vast areas continue to require international cooperation. While in Japan, Hong Kong and Iceland, life expectancy at birth exceeds 80 years, in Botswana and Lesotho it barely reaches 36 years. While in Sweden, Singapore, Denmark, Iceland and Norway, the

under-five mortality rate is below 4 per 1,000 live births, in Sierra Leone, Niger and Liberia it exceeds 235 per 1,000 live births. We must guarantee greater equity in health expenditure throughout the world in order to overcome the huge gap between the few dollars per capita invested in poor countries and the thousands of dollars per capita that are invested in the developed world.

Five years have passed since the Millennium Development Goals were proclaimed, and very little has been done to achieve them. The limited compliance among the most highly developed countries to contribute 0.7 per cent of gross national income to progress in the poorest areas has had an adverse impact on this situation.

Underdevelopment is a global problem; just like the healthy continuity of our species, which is threatened by economic, political and military problems. The least developed countries lack resources to improve education and culture — a requirement for ensuring collective health. The growing burden of foreign debt prevents our people from investing in their development. Underdeveloped countries are still under the yoke of external debt service, which continues to absorb domestic savings and limits the possibilities for social and productive investment.

Far from resolving the problem, successive debt refinancing creates further links that lengthen the chain shackling development and economic progress, and it undermines the ethical foundation and the destiny of humankind. That is why Ecuador supports the initiative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to create a group of highly indebted lower- and middle-income countries that together would work to find creative and long-term solutions.

The neediest countries are marginalized from investment in scientific research and medical discoveries.

The phenomenon of migration has taken on unprecedented dimensions. More than 200 million people are refugees, living outside their countries of origin. Migration causes families to break down and results in cultural deterioration, hampering the emergence of future healthy generations and adequate care of the elderly in conditions of dignity.

Countries must assume binding commitments on the defence of the human rights of migrants. To that end, we welcome the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development — a multidimensional event that reflects the political resolve of sending and receiving countries.

War affects the entire planet. Mortality rates increase not only because of its direct victims, but also because of the destruction of infrastructure. Ethnic and religious problems, or economic aspirations, lead to genocidal practices. World peace, respect for human rights and respect among States are the principles that led to the founding of the United Nations.

Transfixed, the world has witnessed bloodshed and brutal acts of violence against peoples as a consequence of the settlement of conflicts through the use of weapons, and of the limited ability of the international community within the United Nations to find solutions within the framework of the law.

We support the resolution adopted by the Security Council — and the efforts of the Secretary-General — to ensure a commitment by all parties involved to comply with the ceasefire and to withdraw their forces to the borders established before the last confrontation.

The international community and the highest multilateral bodies have been unable to find diplomatic means of resolving such conflicts swiftly and effectively. Thus there needs to be an improvement in the structure of these bodies, including the United Nations system itself.

The Security Council is no longer an expression of a global balance. Today, it represents only itself. For that reason, it must be reformed and democratized. It is unacceptable that, at the dawn of the third millennium, the lives of millions of human beings and of entire populations hinge on the veto of one State or another and on a unilateral geopolitical vision.

The concepts of war and peace are once again at the heart of our reflection on global security and survival. The security of the planet, of peoples, of States and of nations will be sustainable only if it is founded on health, on education, on development and on peace.

Laying the foundations of genuine peace is the greatest moral obligation of all of humankind. The alternative is growing insecurity, fuelled by poverty, illness, destitution and fear.

The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the inception of the Human Rights Council, of which Ecuador is member, and the reforms that are being launched in the Secretariat and in the administrative bodies of the United Nations represent significant steps forward, but they still fall short.

My country, Ecuador, believes that the reform of the system includes strengthening the World Health Organization, its leadership and its fight against poverty and the environmental impact of poverty, in the promotion of local, national and regional initiatives aimed at implementing a fully decentralized global health system. That will make possible enable the development of health systems and models capable of ensuring tangible benefits for all inhabitants of the planet.

Universal health insurance is a valid strategy to guarantee access to a comprehensive health-care system among developing nations at the same level as in developed countries. That would eliminate the shameful asymmetry that is reflected in the unbalanced health statistics that differentiate the various segments of our populations.

In order to implement these and other important health programmes, considerable financial resources must be mobilized, which must flow from international cooperation, but also from developing countries and the so-called donor countries.

In this century, compliance with the Millennium Goals is State policy for the Government of Ecuador. For a multinational, pluricultural and multi-ethnic country such as Ecuador, ensuring respect for human rights means, above all, respect for the other; respect for the development of indigenous peoples, with full recognition of their diversity and of their need to be integrated into the process of modernization, while preserving their identity.

Ecuador welcomes the recent adoption by the Human Rights Council of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and fully supports its adoption by the Assembly.

We reaffirm our commitment to fight crimes of the utmost gravity, such as trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of boys and girls. This year we have strengthened our domestic legislation to punish such crimes. The Government of Ecuador has undertaken economic policy measures to recover income from petroleum operations. That will enable us to engage in sustainable and productive social investment, thus improving living conditions for underprivileged Ecuadorians. As a result of those measures, for the first time in Ecuador, funds are available for scientific and technological research to promote knowledge so that we can be masters of our own destiny.

Ecuador is committed to strengthening South-South relations. We attach great importance to regional integration, in particular through the Andean Community of Nations and the Common Market of the South, which are key actors in building the South American Community of Nations to make progress towards Latin American integration, hemispheric integration and, ultimately, a globalization that has a human face and is equitable for all.

Ecuador promotes all the conditions necessary to reach trade agreements with all countries throughout the world, based on principles that respect the preservation of sensitive areas of national production, ensure food security and protect biological diversity and genetic data — that is to say, life.

Ecuador has consistently fought narco-trafficking and related crimes. That is why we believe that we are fully entitled to ask the United States Senate to renew the Andean Trade Preference Act to encourage legal production and exports.

Ecuador endorses the principles that guided the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO). We hope that the obstacles faced by the Doha round will be successfully overcome to ensure its full validity, particularly with respect to the elimination of export subsidies for agricultural products.

Our relations with Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean are particularly important. At the same time, we are seeking dynamic relationships with countries of the Pacific rim and throughout the world.

Within the framework of the South American Community of Nations, we are beginning to engage in regional meetings with Arab and African countries to strengthen political dialogue, cooperation and mutual trade. Ecuador was greatly pleased to welcome ministers for finance and related areas from Arab and South American countries in order to jointly formulate a strategy for strengthening our economic, trade and investment relationships. With regard to African

nations, my country will participate at the highest level in the summit to be held in Nigeria this November.

Ecuador also attaches great importance to political coordination mechanisms such as the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, whose summit was held recently.

To conclude, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his outstanding work at the head of the Organization despite the enormous difficulties he was obliged to face, including those of a financial nature. The world is confident that the new Secretary-General will be able to continue that work and to implement the processes of United Nations reform, with the commitment of all its Members, particularly the most highly developed countries.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alfredo Palacio, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): Equatorial Guinea is participating in the debates of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in the firm conviction that this world Organization remains the only forum with the authority necessary to resolve any situation facing the international community. Attempting to usurp that authority is irrational; it means negating the universal principles of international law, which govern our world with justice and equity.

That is why, before addressing any of the issues on our agenda, I wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, and to His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, for the arduous task that they accomplished in the face of the conflicts that have threatened the peace and stability of the planet during 2006.

We should also like to welcome the election of Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, Legal Adviser to the Royal Court of Bahrain, who will preside over the General Assembly at this session. We believe that her election is an implicit recognition of the seriousness, dedication and dynamism that characterize her country's quest for global equilibrium and its respect for the principles of international law, human freedom, the right of peoples to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, mutual respect among nations, and international cooperation to promote development and respect for human rights.

This session opens at a time of uncertainty for humanity, due to the many conflicts and the increasing socio-political imbalance threatening the lives of millions of people throughout the world. Humanity today finds itself in a complex situation that raises several questions.

What is the current role of the United Nations, given the absence of priorities in its decision-making process? What has been gained since the end of the cold war? What kind of future can humanity hope for in a world of so-called globalization, governed by a political and economic system characterized by inequality and a lack of cooperation in eradicating poverty in the weakest nations? What kind of future is there for the developing countries when the gap in the acquisition of technology for development continues to grow, or when sprawling intelligence services are constantly devising plans to keep the world under the political dominance and economic influence of the most powerful nations?

Those and similar questions must be the focus of attention of politicians and this world body if we are to straighten this crooked path in international relations. Presently, there is no judge capable of adjudicating any international conflict equitably and impartially. From

our point of view, the authority of the United Nations has been taken hostage by certain interests that are monopolizing the world. Nevertheless, I am convinced that we still have time to rescue the situation if we do not wish to see the international community completely derailed, because the results obtained to date are not satisfactory.

We must first democratize this world Organization by reinstating its rightful authority on the international scene. We must also set an objective value to the globalization of politics by adopting new, equitable political and economic strategies to protect the legitimate interests of the weakest States. If we do not, we must be prepared to endure a world crisis as a result of our inability to sustain the current pressures and jarring disparities among nations.

Many conferences held in various political, economic and social forums have identified a number of strategies to reduce the gap that separates us all, but such strategies have always been met with the complete indifference of those who are supposed to execute them.

We ought not be surprised, then, by the phenomenon of terrorism that threatens the world today, because, although its methods and destructive effects on humans are condemnable, it remains the recourse of the oppressed and a reaction of those who oppose prevailing injustices that have been denounced throughout the last quarter of a century.

The ongoing mass migration of peoples from the South to the North is another consequence of the huge imbalance caused by the present unjust international economic system. That migration will never cease if the North does not help the South to develop with programmes of support and solidarity.

We would like to see democracy, equity and solidarity in a more harmonious world become the rule that would enable international relations to function, especially those governed by the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization, the relationship between the European Union and the nations of the African, Caribbean and the Pacific, and all other economic relations between the North and the South.

Moreover, nature has endowed the world with immense natural resources that are perfectly sufficient to allow all to live in dignity. We do not have to resort to draconian rules of exchange that favour some and discriminate against others. Those who seek to monopolize resources that belong to humanity and who still believe in the larceny of the past, or rather in their own ability to perpetuate illegal exploitation by force, are the same people who today support and maintain vast mercenary organizations that fall upon the weaker nations in order to create internal political instabilities for their own selfish interests.

Indeed, my country has been a victim of such plotting because we own crude oil, the product that is today dividing and destroying the world. My country was able to avert a mercenary invasion on 6 March, 2004, that was organized by powerful countries that continue to dispute among themselves and to nurture ambitions to gain free control of the world's petroleum. Fortunately, our security services were alerted in time and were able to prevent the anticipated genocide. Those directly responsible for the attempted coup are serving time in prison, while the brains behind the whole thing are still at large and thumb their noses at justice.

Nevertheless, my Government does not believe that this natural resource belongs to us alone. My country benefits from barely 30 per cent of the proceeds from that exploitation, because, as we have explained time and again, due to an unjust system of exchange, the operating contracts give the lion's share of those profits to our partners of the North.

In that regard, I noted at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly that if the responsibility of transparency is to be borne equitably, there is a need to demand the same from the operators of the extracting industries and compliance with the contracts and regulations that guarantee equal benefits between the parties concerned.

To conclude, the message from Equatorial Guinea is that we must respond as human beings, because we still have time to make this planet Earth a better place for human beings. Therefore, let us turn our backs on greed, hegemonic ambition and the lack of sensitivity to the sight of such horror and misery that is rife in our world, so that we can respond to this system of injustice and inequality, and so that, as human beings, we will be able to join hands and face, with solidarity, intelligence and wisdom, the challenge to spare humanity from the scourges of war, poverty and underdevelopment.

The Acting President: (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alfred Moisiu, President of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Alfred Moisiu, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alfred Moisiu, President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moisiu (*spoke in Albanian; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like first of all to congratulate President Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to her high post and to assure her of Albania's full support throughout her mandate. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuous vision, leadership and efforts to revitalize and reform the United Nations.

This year, based on the 2005 Summit Document, Albania has undertaken concrete actions to promote the three main pillars, namely, development, security and human rights, in order to implement the ambitious United Nations agenda of reforms. We are filled with optimism at the positive results achieved by the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and the Central Emergency Response Fund. Reform of the Secretariat and management also give us optimism and lead us to believe that the United Nations must continue these reforms in order to respond in the best possible way to new realities and challenges.

We reiterate our willingness and intent to work closely with all delegations and to reach as much agreement as possible by consensus in all significant aspects of the reforms and we believe that solid and inclusive management reform is needed for the strengthening of the United Nations in order to increase transparency and responsibility and achieve a more effective and efficient administration of resources. We support the efforts to reform the Economic and Social Council, while we also believe that reform in the Security Council will produce progress and results, thanks to the efforts and commitment of all member countries.

We welcome the High-level Meeting on International Migration and Development, because we believe that international migration that is supported by the right policies can bring major advantages to the development of the countries of origin and destination, in terms of respecting and guaranteeing the basic rights of migrants, while avoiding discrimination and double standards.

The United Nations role also continues to remain very important in the war against terrorism, especially in securing an effective, global and intensive response to this threat. We praise the recent consensual adoption of the Global Strategy against Terrorism. We also feel that the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism would represent a precious achievement furthering United Nations efforts to combat terrorism. Albania is collaborating very closely with all the United Nations bodies in the war against terrorism, and the visits of the Monitoring Team, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1267 (1999), and the visit of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), demonstrate that Albania is fulfilling its obligations to prevent the activity and financing of terrorist groups at the national level.

We have supported Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) on the Israeli-Lebanon conflict, which provides for a peaceful solution of the issue and the sending of peacekeeping forces to that area. Albania has joined other countries in giving financial support to rebuild Lebanon.

The main orientation of Albania's foreign policy remains European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and that is why the efforts of the Albanian State and society are directed towards meeting European Union and NATO standards. A few days ago, the European Parliament ratified the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Albania and the European Union,

which places our country at the most important stage — that of fulfilling the obligations that stem from the Agreement, and all Albanian political groups and the entire society are conscious of this. We all believe that actual membership in the European Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the prospective accession to the EU and NATO are part of the natural move towards development, rather than an objective per se.

We have established relations based on active cooperation and dialogue at the regional level with all the countries concerned by actively working to strengthen regional security and stability. Together with the countries of the region, we have created an agenda of joint action against terrorism, organized crime, the circulation of arms and border management. In the same way, we have undertaken concrete initiatives to encourage economic development in the region.

Albania believes that the main issue to be resolved in our region continues to be that of Kosovo. Kosovo has made great progress in terms of internal stability; advancing the fulfilment of the required international standards; improving inter-ethnic relations; establishing and efficiently running central and local Kosovar institutions; its serious and professional commitment to the process of negotiations with Belgrade through the intermediary of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, President Ahtisaari; and in its gradual integration into regional activities, initiatives and structures as part of Kosovo's integrating process in the European Union and NATO.

The leadership of Kosovo, the representative Kosovar institutions, the political opposition, civil society, the media and the entire civil factor are demonstrating social and political cohesion and increasing unity and open and full cooperation with the international factor to build a sovereign, independent, democratic and multi-ethnic State integrated into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures and at peace with its neighbours. The United Nations Mission and the commitments of the Secretary-General have also played a significant part in that success.

The progress of talks between Pristina and Belgrade in Vienna is positive. We encourage the continuation of constructive dialogue and hope that the Serbian side will do the same by demonstrating realism, solidarity with the will of the international community, and respect for the aspirations of the people of Kosovo. Albania opposes any possible scenario for the partition or disintegration of Kosovo, which past experience suggests could entail conflict and instability in the future.

We support a full and speedy solution to the issue of the status of Kosovo that takes into consideration the will of its inhabitants and guarantees functionality within the Kosovar State and society and the freedoms of the minority communities. A sovereign, independent, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovar State with a clear Euro-Atlantic perspective will serve the interests of peace and stability in the region and beyond.

The view occasionally expressed that the independence of Kosovo would encourage the implementation of similar solutions to current problems in other countries and regions does not seem accurate to us. The solution of any problem must take the historical and geographical context into account, along with other considerations that exclude the search for and mechanical application of inappropriate analogies. Given the historical, juridical and moral aspects of the issue of Kosovo, as well as the fact that it evolved through the convulsions and wars that accompanied the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, I believe that its solution in accordance with the will of the citizens of Kosovo themselves is entirely legitimate. In that light, the solution will also mark the final stage of that disintegration and the turning of a new page as part of democratic developments in the Balkans over the past decade.

Albania is at an important phase in the process of comprehensive institutional, legal and economic reform with a view to adopting European models and standards. We are committed to improving governance at all levels to ensure that it adheres as closely as possible to the interests of our citizens and the country. The current Government has undertaken various economic initiatives to liberalize procedures and enhance our capacity to attract foreign investment. We are aware that this objective can be achieved only through reforms that realistically promote a competitive and open market for unfettered initiative that offers as many people as possible the opportunity to conduct business or to be employed and is coordinated with reforms in the priority public sectors. Such reforms include increasing investment in infrastructure and the energy, education and health

sectors, complemented by effective social policies in favour of social groups and individuals in need. Our objective is for economic growth to contribute directly to meeting the Millennium Development Goals by making it the main factor in the reduction of poverty, reducing the unemployment rate to the average level of the developed European countries, and securing stable and long-term economic growth that enhances opportunity for future generations.

A comprehensive campaign against corruption is part of our efforts to strengthen the rule of law and develop the country. In that framework, concrete action is being taken to implement legislative and institutional reform in order to take preventive measures, narrow opportunities for corruptive abuses, enhance public transparency, eliminate conflicts of interest, improve access to decision-making, and strengthen the monitoring role of civil society, local communities and the media.

We have also paid special attention to the fight against organized crime, drug and human trafficking, and money-laundering. Today we can state with full conviction that those phenomena are being met with the full power of the law and the country's consolidated structures, and in cooperation with the international factor. That is why our results have been significant.

Albania supports and contributes to a strong and effective United Nations capable of meeting new challenges, because we believe the Organization to be based on the values and principles of multilateralism, global partnership for development, and joint action to strengthen collective peace and security to the benefit of human rights, the rule of law and commitments against terrorism.

In conclusion, allow me to affirm that my country will be active in fulfilling the commitments and obligations arising from its responsibilities within the Organization and from those decisions that the General Assembly will adopt at its sixty-first session.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alfred Moisiu, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President De Menezes: As I have just been re-elected, this is my first opportunity to speak to this forum at the beginning of my second term. It is therefore with great pleasure that I am here today for this sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

Please allow me to congratulate Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election as the new President of the General Assembly. We are fortunate to have as our President a diplomat with such magnificent credentials. In addition, this is a milestone for the United Nations which makes us all proud. My country, Sao Tome and Principe, is a firm believer in gender equality. I am proud to say that we have a very high percentage of girls in our schools. A woman has held the presidency of our National Assembly, and the current head of our Supreme Court is a woman. We have had two female Prime Ministers, and today women head half of our Government ministries. We are therefore delighted by her election and wish her every success.

I thank also the outgoing President, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his remarkable work, especially in the area of advancing reform of the United Nations. Words are insufficient to pay tribute to outgoing Secretary-General Kofi Annan. A very special son of Africa, he has been an extraordinary leader of our Organization. He has worked unceasingly, showing enormous vision and great courage. No challenge has been too large or too dangerous. My country and I owe a special debt of gratitude to the Secretary-General, whose intervention

during a 2003 coup attempt helped preserve democracy in Sao Tome and Principe. My people and I thank him. We can only hope that his successor will prove as praiseworthy as he.

We are meeting here today at a time of growing international tension and of increased terrorist attacks on innocent civilians on every continent. We see unending conflicts, even genocide. Never have we needed the United Nations more than at this time, when life as we know it on our planet is threatened by climate change. It is tragic that in the face of all these challenges, the United Nations is often unable to act, because internal politics and a lack of resources constantly hamper its ability to respond as needed.

No country can live in a vacuum in today's world. For better or for worse, we are together in deciding the fate of our planet. We can no longer be only citizens of our town, our region or our country. We also cannot blindly think that our religion is the only religion, when God created so many, all believing in a Supreme Being but worshiping in different fashions. God also painted us in a rainbow of colours and did not leave instructions for one colour to be in charge of all the others. Nor did He choose a special region or language to rule over everyone else. We must pull together so that no one is left behind. There is enough for everybody, if only we would share. We all could live in freedom and in peace, with work, health, education and dignity, if only we would work together.

While we must work together for certain common goals, we must also respect our cultural differences. One size does not fit all. The practice of democracy in Latin America may not be the same as democracy in Asia. What worked to create economic growth in Europe may not work in Africa. Each country, each people, each region, each town must have the freedom to decide what is best for it, while also respecting the rights of all and everyone's responsibility as a world citizen.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is still out of control. In my own tiny, isolated island country, we were long immune from it. Despite desperate efforts at education and prevention, our tiny population is being laid waste by a shocking increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases. We have only one hospital and a handful of doctors. We are helpless in the face of this crisis, as we cannot afford the antiretrovirals we need for all our sick people, nor do we have the ability to police our maritime borders to keep out the main source of infection. Our women and children are among the millions of other faceless victims around the world, and, without help, we could one day face extinction.

Climate change is already sabotaging many of the efforts being made to achieve sustainable development goals, augmenting poverty in developing countries, especially in the least developed countries and the small island developing States. There is new and strong evidence that most of the warming observed is attributable to human activities. As the polar ice caps melt, my low-lying island country faces a second kind of extinction, that of disappearing beneath the waves of the ocean.

I cannot continue without again asking the Assembly why a country of 23 million people is not represented at the United Nations, where every country is supposed to have one vote. I refer here to Taiwan, an established democracy whose people live in freedom and in peace. Their dynamic and technologically advanced economy is a model for creating wealth in today's global economy. Taiwan is also an excellent world citizen, generous in humanitarian and development aid.

For centuries, the people of Sao Tome and Principe were debilitated by endemic malaria, and thousands died. Countless attempts to control the mosquitoes carrying that disease failed, until Taiwan brought the necessary know-how and resources to bear. Today cases of malaria have been reduced by 60 per cent. Our doctors and nurses say that there have never been so few cases of malaria in living memory. Thanks to Taiwan and also to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, we are well on our way to finally bringing this scourge under control.

In addition to humanitarian and development aid, Taiwan also maintains productive commercial ties with many United Nations Member countries and is a member of the World Trade Organization, the Asian Development Bank and the Asia Pacific Economic Group. The principle of universality is consecrated in the United Nations Charter. Permanent members of the Security Council should not continue to ignore the case of Taiwan.

Another issue that continues to require the urgent attention of all of us is the embargo on Cuba. This is a relic of the cold war that should be lifted immediately.

While mentioning the Security Council, I must say that my country supports the calls that have reverberated through these halls for more than a decade. We must reform the Security Council. Its membership and institutional structures reflect outdated geopolitical realities and political thinking that was shaped by the world of 1945. Giving only five permanent members the veto power and special privileges puts the Security Council out of touch with the world. Africa, for example, does not have a single permanent member. This is not acceptable.

I will close by talking about poverty, or rather what we are all seeking, which is the end of poverty. The Millennium Development Goals are a noble project. Sao Tome and Principe is grateful to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the Goals' Director Jeffrey Sachs for their tireless efforts to pull poor countries out of what Professor Sachs so rightly calls the poverty trap.

But how did so many countries get into the poverty trap? We are unlikely to get out, or stay out, unless we know how we got there in the first place. I think it is time we all faced some of the unspoken truths about poverty. Why are we poor? Economists traditionally told us that economic wealth comes from a combination of man-made resources, such as roads, factories, machines, telephone systems; human resources, hard work and education; and technological resources, technical know-how and technological machinery. But if this were true, then poor countries could simply build some schools, pave roads and buy some computers, and we would quickly catch up with rich countries.

But there is something wrong here. While Taiwan, South Korea and China have all been doubling their incomes every decade, many poor countries making these changes are not growing faster than rich countries. In fact, they are growing more slowly, or even getting poorer. So there is a new theory that says the more you have, the faster you grow. This could explain why rich countries stay rich, and poor countries fall farther behind — except that it does not explain how Chile, India, Singapore, Mauritius and Botswana are catching up. These dynamic countries — not Japan, not Switzerland, not the United States — are the fastest-growing economies on the planet. Fifty years ago they were trapped in poverty. That is no longer the case.

Why have so many other countries been left behind? The newest theories tell us that the answer is simple. With or without natural resources, with or without human resources, with or without technology, badly governed countries are poor countries. Bad government causes poverty. When States do not protect property and people; when national revenues benefit self-interested political insiders who oppose any actions that would lead to more equal distribution of income and resources; when Government officials waste funds; when people are hired on the basis of being from the right family or region or political grouping; when nobody monitors Government spending; when corruption is noted but never punished; and when illegal activities are not restrained by law, the press or democratic opposition, then miserable results follow.

We have all heard of the "natural resource curse", which shows that large amounts of oil or diamonds, for example, tend to make democracy and good government less likely. But recent studies have also found that there is also an "aid curse". Without meaning to do so, multilateral and bilateral donors can actually make Governments worse. And just as badly governed countries tend to be poor, so badly governed aid projects, without transparency or accountability, also tend to fail.

Humanitarian aid has proven far more successful than long-term development aid, because it is given in highly targeted bursts. It is also usually given as medicine, food, clothing or tents and taken directly to the location of the tragedy, with doctors and nurses on the ground rather than consultants.

Of course, there have been some beautiful successes in aid programmes, mostly in health care, with victories over smallpox, drug-resistant tuberculosis and river blindness. Adult literacy has risen, as had life expectancy until the AIDS pandemic wiped out that improvement.

Aid gives hope to millions of people around the world. We simply need to mend it, not end it. My own country has certainly suffered from its own share of bad governance — for the most part unwittingly, because of our own inexperience. But we are learning quickly in our short history, and we now have one of the most stable and robust democracies in all of Africa.

We have the prospect of oil in our waters and in waters shared with our neighbour, Nigeria. We have

already taken steps to ensure that any potential petroleum resources are not wasted but are protected for the benefit of all our citizens with an oil revenue management law that was passed unanimously in our parliament in 2004.

We cannot let the past bury the future. We can lift billions out of poverty. When I was first elected President of my country five years ago, I lit a candle of hope for the long-suffering people of Sao Tome and Principe. We are not there yet, but the light is getting brighter.

If development were easy, everyone would already be developed! We cannot sit in supine indifference. Let us renew our efforts and work together with respect, dignity and dedication for the benefit of all the peoples of the world and for the fate of our beautiful planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an add by the President of the Democratic Repuolic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Kabila (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Sir, I would ask you to kindly convey to Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa my warm and heartfelt congratulations upon her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. My congratulations go also to all the other members of the Bureau who, I am certain, will help her to successfully accomplish her illustrious and sensitive delicate tasks as President. I also take the opportunity to pay due tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, for the high quality of his work during a term of office that took place in a difficult international environment.

I cannot continue without expressing my gratitude, and that of the entire Congolese people, to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, whose mandate will come to an end this year on a positive note for all. Thanks to the remarkable leadership of that worthy son of Africa, the States Members of our Organization have enjoyed a decade of intense and active diplomacy which has made it possible to solve a large number of conflicts throughout the world. Here, I should mention especially the situation of the countries of the Great Lakes region, in particular that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As the sixty-first session of the General Assembly is taking place, my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is passing through a special period of its political history. The transition period that began in 1990 will soon draw to a close, with the establishment of the country's new institutions.

On 30 July, we held countrywide, in a climate of peace and transparency, the first truly democratic pluralistic elections in 40 years. The success of that undertaking constitutes a great joint effort by the Congolese people and by the bilateral and multilateral partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those partners.

With regard to the unfortunate events in Kinshasa from 20 to 22 August 2006 following the announcement of the provisional results of the first round of the presidential elections by the Independent Electoral Commission, all necessary steps have been taken in order to prevent such incidents from happening again. The electoral process will continue in a climate of national peace and harmony.

The progress achieved daily, sometimes at the cost of much sacrifice, is the outcome of a difficult political process that was launched, as members know, after a long internal and external armed conflict. The humanitarian consequences of that conflict are one of the worst tragedies ever experienced by mankind.

Problems remain in many sectors, and the next Government will have to confront them, taking account of the urgent and legitimate expectations of the Congolese people.

The new Government must continue integrating and reforming the army, in order to guarantee peace and security for our people. It must work to improve the living conditions of the population. In other words, it must do its utmost to meet their fundamental needs, in particular health care, education, food security, basic infrastructures, electricity and drinking water for all — without forgetting, of course, the fight against malaria and HIV/AIDS and the fight against poverty.

In order to succeed, the new Government must, inter alia, strengthen good governance by fighting corruption and guaranteeing legal and judiciary security in the framework of ongoing judicial reform. It will be possible to achieve that vision only by mobilizing the energy of our entire nation through active and inclusive participation by all of the sons and daughters of our country, whatever their political, ideological or religious convictions may be.

In that regard, we welcome the configuration of our future parliament, which already reflects the wealth and political diversity of our people, and which has an oversight role that will be fundamental to the functioning of the State. For that reason, I reaffirm my faith in the concept of peacebuilding and make an urgent appeal to the international community to continue its partnerships with the Democratic Republic of the Congo after the establishment of the new institutions.

As we observe the international scene, we see recurring scourges, including continuing tensions and armed conflicts in several regions of the world, the worsening the living conditions in developing countries, especially in Africa; the rise in clandestine immigration; the destruction caused by different pandemics; the increase in crime and acts of terrorism; and the harm to the conservation and protection of the environment. In view of these threats, the Assembly at its previous session had organized, as part of its work, the World Summit of heads of State and Government, dedicated to an assessment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other commitments resulting from the major international conferences and meetings.

Following that assessment several decisions were taken, including the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council — two basic structures whose effective establishment we can only welcome. Achieving the MDGs is a priority for a good number of countries, especially the most disadvantaged. That is why the momentum in the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the Millennium Summit should not weaken. We would like to see our discussions here include those issues.

In addition to the above-mentioned scourges, other matters are a source of concern for our country, including the reform of the Security Council, the complete cancellation of the debt of developing countries, an increase in official development assistance, the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism and the global strategy to fight that phenomenon, armed conflicts, collective security, and the adoption of an international treaty on forced disappearances. All those issues challenge the harmonious progress of the community of nations and the very future of coming generations.

To meet those challenges effectively, all countries of the world must show solidarity with each other, in a spirit of sincere cooperation and humanist justice. With regard to crises in the world — in the Middle East, in Africa or elsewhere — the Democratic Republic of the Congo recommends, more than ever, their peaceful solution under the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

I hope this Assembly shares my belief in the rebirth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the advent of new institutions seeking to usher in a new era of peace, stability and development, not only in my country, but also in Central Africa and the entire region of the Great Lakes. Despite the challenges our Organization faces day after day, it is on a note of hope, of solidarity among nations and of synergy in their actions for a brighter future for present and future generations that I conclude my statement. I hope for much success in our work.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josef Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

The Honourable Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Badawi (Malaysia): First, I wish to congratulate Ms. Haya Rasheed Al-Khalifa and the State of Bahrain on her election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. As an Asian, a Muslim and the current Chairman of the Summit Conference of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, I welcome her election with pride and satisfaction. I am confident that she will be able to steer the proceedings of the Assembly with consummate skill and achieve meaningful results. Needless to say, Malaysia will support her in any way that we can.

Allow me to also pay tribute to her distinguished predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, the Foreign Minister of Sweden, for the exemplary way in which he guided the proceedings of the Assembly's sixtieth session, during some of the most trying times for the United Nations.

Speaking of trying times, I would also like to pay tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts in serving humanity, not only during his tenure as the Secretary-General but throughout an entire career dedicated to the ideals of our Organization.

I must pay a special tribute to the members of the Secretariat and those serving under the United Nations banner, in particular those who have made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives, like the four members of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon who were killed last July during the height of the Israeli offensive against Lebanon.

Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We must continually remind ourselves that the United Nations was brought into being to serve as a forum, and, as in Tennyson's words, to be a parliament of man. Six decades later, we have yet to achieve the intentions of the United Nations Charter. Indeed, the situation in some corners of the world is bleaker than it ever was before. Yet the human family is still unable to find solutions to its own problems.

As I review in my mind the events of the past year, I personally feel most disturbed that many of the ills in the affairs of our world were the result of irrational actions caused by prejudice in human attitudes. Basically, we have failed to engage in dialogue, communicate and reach out to one another as fellow humans inhabiting the same planet. Indeed, the greatest discord today exists among the descendants of Abraham. These are the People of the Book: the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, who in fact share a common beginning, which was the religion of Abraham.

Of course, dialogue will be endless if it is not accompanied by action. The purpose of honest discussion and engagement is to enable us to formulate rational and effective policies. To achieve this, I believe that all of us need to listen well and be sincere in our relations with one another. Much of the dialogue that takes place results in the parties talking at, instead of talking to, one another. Any dialogue will certainly fail if it is predetermined that certain States are "rogues" or that certain countries are necessarily "evil". Such name-calling provides an excuse not to listen, let alone engage in serious negotiations to find amicable solutions to serious problems.

A blatant example of the refusal to grant even a hearing was the early decision by many important countries not to recognize or do business with Hamas after that group was elected to power in Palestine through a properly conducted democratic election. External assistance was stopped. Funds were blocked. As a result, millions of Palestinians have suffered for months without pay or food. I hope that all sanctions against Palestine will soon be a matter of the past, when President Abbas succeeds in the task of putting together a coalition Government embracing all parties in Palestine. Surely, to dictate or show preferences as

to who should be elected to power in other countries is irrational and a sign of double standards.

The oppression of Palestine, which is being allowed to fester; the invasion of Afghanistan; the conquest of Iraq; and, most recently, the unrestrained destruction of Lebanon have all been carried out in the name of the war against terrorism. The actions of Israel in the Middle East are being supported, either openly or tacitly, supposedly in defence of the Judeo-Christian tradition against the spread of radical militant Islam, thus legitimizing all those actions, no matter how brutal. Even Western commentators have conceded that Israel's latest assault against Lebanon has helped make what may once have been extremist opinions part of the Muslim mainstream. The Muslim world certainly sees all this as complicity to humiliate Muslim countries and Muslim societies.

I am afraid that the schism between the West and the Muslim world will grow even deeper unless the international community is prepared to accept certain facts as the truth. The fact is that the sense of humiliation being felt by the Muslim world is the root cause for the loss of trust and confidence between the Muslim world, on the one side, and Judeo-Christian civilization, on the other. If the international community refuses or fails to accept this fact, then I am afraid we are denying the truth.

I believe that much of the prejudice against Muslims stems from a lack of understanding of the true nature of Islam and what it stands for. For instance, there is a lack of appreciation in the West of the role of religion in the lives of Muslims. Modern Europe has generally embraced secularism and has largely removed religion from the public domain, placing it in the confines of the home and family. For Muslims, the teachings of Islam serve as their guide for doing all things, whether conducting their affairs in the public domain or practicing the religion in their private homes. I suggest that many of the misunderstandings, especially those between the Christian West and the Muslim world, arise out of this fundamental misunderstanding of the place of religion in the daily lives of Muslims all over the world. When dealing with Muslims, one cannot separate them from their religion, because that is their way of life.

My country, Malaysia, is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multicultural country. However, Islam is respected by all our people as the official religion. The Government which I now lead has embarked on a programme to communicate a proper appreciation of Islam as a force for good. We call it Islam Hadhari, which is an approach for achieving a progressive society that is compatible with modernity yet firmly rooted in the noble values and injunctions of Islam. This approach has been accepted by everyone in Malaysia because underlying the whole message of Islam Hadhari is a call for equitable development and progress. It is a call for moderation and tolerance as well as the assurance of justice and fairness for all, irrespective of their faith.

The point I am making is that Islam the religion is not the source of intolerance between people of different faiths. In fact, one of the fundamental teachings of Islam is the requirement to respect other religions. The Holy Koran contains that commandment by God. We must not confuse the perverse words and evil deeds of a small number of extremists who operate on the fringes of Muslim societies as a reflection of Islamic culture. The demonization of Islam must be stopped and Islamophobia must be removed. The politics of fear must cease to dictate the conduct of relations between peoples and nations. If the politics of fear is not stopped, then prejudice and irrationality will continue to prevail in the affairs of the world, and dialogue will continue to fail.

However, we must persevere, not only to eliminate political and religious discord among men, but also to eradicate social and economic injustices, particularly poverty and disease. That is an international responsibility, not only in the name of humanity, but also as a necessary aspect of maintaining international peace and stability.

We must therefore do all we can to ensure that the impoverished and marginalized also enjoy the fruits of economic growth, globalization and free trade. It would indeed be unfortunate if we were unable to do so, because the world has become more wealthy than ever before. We should learn from history that any economic system in which disparities exist cannot be sustained in the long term. All too often, such societies come to a violent end. The civil wars and social unrest we witness today mark a phase that we must stop.

Malaysia firmly believes that the key to prosperity, inclusion and equity is sustained economic growth based on the building of national capacities, particularly human capital development. While

education and skills by themselves are no guarantee of success, they are indispensable ingredients for the greater productivity of individual citizens, which in turn gives them hope for a better future.

However, efforts at the national level alone are not sufficient. Those efforts need to be supplemented by the establishment of an international economic order that would cover areas such as trade, finance, debt, official development assistance (ODA) and development, and that would enable the developing world to overcome its difficulties and contribute to global prosperity. Some progress has been made, but the overall results have been far from satisfactory.

Given the economic clout that the developed countries possess, it is essential that they demonstrate flexibility and goodwill at this critical juncture in the world trade talks. Malaysia will continue to be supportive of multilateral trade negotiations. Malaysia's approach will, however, never be premised simply on the notion of progressive liberalization. We will continue to take a pragmatic approach by combining liberalization with regulation in a policy mix consistent with the country's economic conditions and development needs.

It is all too clear that our human family must come together and that its members must talk to one another if we are to overcome the problems that threaten to engulf us all. To talk, however, is easy; to engage in dialogue and to communicate is more difficult. Indeed, this may be the most difficult of all human endeavours, given the human temperament with all its passions and foibles. It will require courage, humility and an appreciation of the diversities that make us human.

We must not be patronizing or condescending in our relationships, and we must certainly not be threatening. We must be persuasive and patient in dealing with complexities. The pursuit of peace, justice and fairness in relations among nations and peoples has never been easy. Let us take up this challenge, with all the fortitude that it requires, and together put into effect a better world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Adnan Terzić, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Adnan Terzić, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Adnan Terzić, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Terzić (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (*spoke in Bosnian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour and a pleasure to address the General Assembly at its sixty-first session on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

First of all, I would like to congratulate Ms. Al-Khalifa on her election to her important post, and also to thank the former President for his contribution to the United Nations reform process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union (EU), which provides a framework for the discussion of issues such as peace, stability, development, human rights, the rule of law and the need to further strengthen and reform the United Nations.

We endorse the EU statement, but we would also like to share with the Assembly Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience in peacebuilding, the implementation of human rights and the rule of law and economic development in a post-conflict environment. We believe that in that way we can contribute to the future success of the international community elsewhere in the world.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is, beyond any doubt, an example of successful intervention by the international community, despite a few negative experiences. I would like to make it absolutely clear that the job in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not yet done. There are still

some bridges that we have to cross before we will have finished the 15-year-long marathon task of stopping the fighting, promoting reconciliation and building a stable Bosnia and Herzegovina with a view to becoming an EU member in the near future.

Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs to Europe; it is part of the European continent. Medical students — future doctors — all take the Hippocratic oath. They swear to apply the highest ethical norms. Law students get their basic training from the standards of Roman law. The European heritage and European practices are firmly rooted in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We must now embrace all European Union standards and norms. We do not feel discouraged when we hear people talk of "enlargement fatigue". Through the enlargement process, Europe is spreading democracy itself. It would be completely contrary to EU and United Nations principles to grow tired of the spread of democracy.

Recent events in the Middle East have shown us how important it is to achieve a just and lasting peace there. But just as we sympathize with people living in crisis areas today, so too those living in such areas can observe the process of peacebuilding in Bosnia. One should pay attention not just to the stabilization of one State in the Balkans but also to the capacity that the EU and the rest of the international community have to initiate swift and efficient intervention.

We in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been assisted by the United Nations, NATO, the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Council of Europe. We have also benefited from other, unique assistance mechanisms, such as the recently established Office of the High Representative and the Peace Implementation Council, which include European Union members, Japan, Russia, the United States of America, Canada, Turkey and others.

The war has been stopped, the refugees have returned and today we are negotiating a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. However, none of us should allow the current flaws in Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop into something more serious, leading to instability.

As magnificent as it was in terms of stopping the war, the Dayton Peace Agreement did not tackle some essential issues, such as providing for every citizen to enjoy equal rights throughout the country, or for the State to be able to exercise its powers as a modern, multi-ethnic State.

Many visitors to my country are especially impressed by the number of churches, mosques and synagogues that there are, and the way in which they coexist in close proximity to one another, serving their purpose in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is the spirit of Bosnia that we inherited from our ancestors, but the Dayton Agreements have not enabled us to maintain that traditional aspect of the country.

On the other hand, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been able to achieve economic and political development, which strengthens its prospects for joining Euro-Atlantic integration processes. The number of foreign military troops on our soil has been reduced tenfold and the mandate of the EU-led peacekeeping force has shifted from stabilization to integration. We have established a single economic space and a single judiciary system, and the various intelligence services are now united and are for the first time under strict and democratic parliamentary supervision. We have formed a single State-level Ministry of Defence, and thereby qualified for accession to the NATO Partnership for Peace programme.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it is today, was not shaped by conventional political means. Its structure was defined by the Dayton Peace Agreement as a way to prevent war. The sustainability of the Bosnia and Herzegovina of Dayton has been strengthened by the launching of the Stabilization and Association Agreement negotiations with the European Union, which began on the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Agreement.

The Office of the High Representative is scheduled to be abolished in the middle of next year. That Office will be transformed into the Office of the Special Representative of the EU for Bosnia and Herzegovina. That should be linked to our signing of the SAA with the European Union. So far, negotiations have gone well, and Bosnia has demonstrated sufficient awareness and technical ability to enable it to embark on the Euro-integration project. We are preparing for elections in October, but, unfortunately, the ongoing campaigns have delayed our efforts to fulfil the vital political criteria.

Next week, by voting, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina will have an opportunity to participate in

the shaping of their future. They deserve election campaigns that look not at the past, but towards the future. They do not deserve campaigns such as the one that was characterized last week by the EU Council of Ministers as a cause for concern and prompted it to stress the EU's commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina participates actively in regional cooperation, and we participate in all regional initiatives, including the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and many other programmes and projects. On that basis, a huge number of bilateral and multilateral agreements were signed, creating an international legal framework for cooperation on and the harmonization of a number of issues.

That is especially interesting in the light of the Kosovo issue. Bosnia and Herzegovina keeps a close eye on the negotiations. We believe that any solution must be the result of negotiations if both sides are to accept it. Any future solution should accommodate a common future within the Euro-Atlantic environment. The consequences of the final solution, once it is found, must under no circumstances jeopardize the stability of the region or that of the neighbouring States.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina is on the path to successfully achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Those priorities are complementary with the criteria for European Union membership. In cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina is developing capacities for the detection and prevention of illegal trading in and the proliferation of radioactive materials throughout our territory.

As a mine-affected country, Bosnia and Herzegovina is quite active in the implementation of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It is well known that there is still a significant number of landmines in our country as a consequence of war. I should like to thank all the countries that have contributed to the demining process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are also playing an active role in United Nations programmes that address the issue of HIV/AIDS. We have established a State-level commission to fight AIDS. Its current activities focus on preventing the disease from spreading, establishing an early warning system, and informing the public of the dangers of the disease.

As a young democracy and a country with special experience, Bosnia and Herzegovina supported the forming of the Human Rights Council and the strengthening of the role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We believe that their work is gaining in importance every day. We strongly and decisively support the international system for universal human rights protection.

In my country, human rights have been violated not only by war and crises, but also by certain decisions of the international community. One example is the problem of decertified police officers. The decisions of the United Nations-led international police caused them to lose their work permits. They were offered no opportunity to file complaints or take their cases to any type of court review. Our Ministry for Human Rights has prepared, in close cooperation with the Office of the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, a possible model for a review process, to be led by the European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the current representative of the international police presence in the country. The absurd and flagrant violation of human rights committed by the United Nations itself is a mistake that must be acknowledged. It can thereby be corrected and the credibility of the United Nations as an institution preserved.

One of the most important international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina is cooperation with The Hague Tribunal for war crimes. That is indeed a precondition for long-term stability. That is why it was offered to the entire region as a condition of further progress in Euro-Atlantic terms. According to the data gathered by both domestic and foreign intelligence, most wanted war criminals are not hiding on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our institutions are focused on cutting off the financial support networks. It is a sad and pitiful fact that Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic have not yet been arrested, but it is even worse for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its citizens to be punished because of the two of them. We are penalizing the victims instead of punishing the criminals. Bosnia and Herzegovina

must be allowed to pursue progress on its road to democratization and the European Union, because improvement in that regard will create an even stronger mechanism for destroying the war criminals' support network.

The horrible terrorist attacks on New York, the anniversary of which we recently marked, changed the world's entire security paradigm. The attacks made us think in ever more serious terms. Terrorism is one of the greatest challenges faced by the modern world, and it is virtually impossible for countries to respond to such a challenge individually. Member States may individually strengthen their capacities, but a global and complete response can be achieved only by the United Nations.

Having established the Ministry of Security, an intelligence agency and an investigations and protection agency at the State level, and by coordinating their work through the Counter-Terrorism Task Force, we have undertaken a series of very important steps not just in terms of internal reforms, but also in terms of our contribution to the global anti-terrorist campaign. We have adopted an anti-terrorism strategy for the period 2006-2009 that will guide us through the implementation of European standards in that field. We are in the final stages of adopting a new law on the fight against terrorism and financial support for terrorism.

Bosnia and Herzegovina wholeheartedly supported the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, and we genuinely hoped to contribute actively to its work. The experience of peacebuilding in Bosnia is vast and relevant, and we are eager to share it with other Member States.

Although our country was not elected, we wish to thank all those who supported us through the process. At the very least, we sent yet another signal to the world that we are no longer simply the receivers of international aid. The support we gained has encouraged us to continue to insist on a more balanced and more proactive participation in United Nations projects worldwide. In that context, I stress Bosnia and Herzegovina's aspirations as a candidate for non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the term 2010-2011, and I would welcome the Assembly's support in that regard.

Despite our limited capacities, we try to participate in international peace efforts. We have sent our military observers and police officers to the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Haiti, the Sudan, Eritrea and Cyprus. As a sign of our support for the Iraqi people, we have deployed a demining squadron to assist, to the extent of its capacities, in building a sustainable and stable Iraq.

The escalation of conflict in the Middle East marked this summer and claimed many victims, numerous civilians among them. We support Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) calling for a full cessation of hostilities. We particularly appreciate the diplomatic efforts of Security Council members, including the United States and France, that led to the final harmonization of the resolution. We hope that this positive breakthrough will constitute a sound basis for diplomatic efforts in the Middle East and that lasting peace will finally be achieved in that region.

I would also like to call attention to the humanitarian issues that are generally discussed at every session of the General Assembly. In order to contribute to the work of the humanitarian agencies and United Nations efforts in general regarding that very important field, Bosnia and Herzegovina has submitted to the membership a draft declaration relating to basic tenets of humanitarian action in emergency situations, contained in document A/60/627. The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina seeks to contribute to progress in world preparedness for emergency situations on the basis of our own lessons learnt. I invite Member States to consider the adoption of the draft declaration and to continue to contribute to progress in such important activities globally.

In conclusion, I thank all members for the assistance and support that we received from the international community in years gone by and to express my hope that they will use their voices to support Bosnia and Herzegovina as a candidate for non-permanent Security Council membership. In so doing, they will contribute to Bosnia's assumption of its place in international relations. Furthermore, I wish to thank Mr. Kofi Annan, on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his contribution and commitment to stability and prosperity in my country. He has confirmed his commitment by visiting us twice.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Adnan Terzić, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia.

Mr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sanader (Croatia): At the outset, allow me to join other delegations in congratulating the President of the General Assembly on her election and to express my deep conviction that, under her skilful leadership, this session will achieve remarkable results.

Allow me also to extend my country's sentiments of deepest appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. His relentless work for a better world has been most remarkable. Leading the United Nations for 10 years in very sensitive times, his achievements, humanism, vision and initiatives have crucially contributed to the Organization. That has been recognized worldwide. I wish him all the best in his future engagements and thank him.

We live in a fragile world — a world disturbed and unsettled, a world that is marked by conflicts, controversies and confrontations of an entirely new nature. The architecture and mindsets of yesterday's world are giving way to a web of new challenges. Yesterday, it was all about blocs, ideologies, the cold war and appeasement. Today, it is all about ethnicity, conflicts, burning regions, colliding religions, mass destruction, terror and poverty.

Today, international order is marked by three extremely demanding and global challenges: global tensions, global imbalances and global constraints. In that triangle, we need to strive to deliver sustainable solutions. Our responsibility is enormous — indeed, even a we seek to ensure global opportunities, freedom and shared values, this new world in the making is in danger of lapsing into mistrust, disagreements and divisions.

We live in a world of extraordinary inequalities in opportunity, but our world is also a global and interdependent one, where a broad sharing of economic and political opportunities could serve as an effective instrument for economic growth and development. In so doing, we can start turning the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, into action.

My country is aware that a greater mobilization of domestic resources in developing countries is a necessity. Croatia has made significant progress in creating an enabling environment for partnership and innovation. Tremendous changes have taken place in the development of a market economy, changing ownership structures, creating a business environment, and reforms in the public and private sector. Above all, Croatia has progressed in ensuring domestic democratic stability and a prosperous international position as a framework for long-term development.

Croatia supports the commitments to the goals and targets deriving from the United Nations summits in Monterrey and Johannesburg, and the related processes, such as the Doha Development Agenda and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. We also support the emphasis on achieving the targets in developed countries for official development assistance based on actual needs — rising from today's 0.33 per cent of gross national income to at least 0.51 per cent by 2010 and 0.7 per cent by 2015 — to meet the Millennium Development Goals and each country's absorption capacity. We recognize that mobilizing financial resources for development and the effective use of those resources in developing countries are central to a global partnership for development.

Still, simply raising the level of official development assistance is not enough to enable the international community to fulfil its obligations towards the countries in need. It is also necessary to contribute to a more equitable distribution of aid that, unfortunately, quite often remains outside the regular economic and financial flows. Croatia also welcomes initiatives to enhance the quality of aid and to increase its impact, bearing in mind the fact that progress both for donors and for partner countries can be facilitated by the harmonization efforts at the international and regional levels. Therefore, we stress the need for an integrated approach among international institutions.

Croatia recognizes the needs of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa and the least developed and landlocked developing States, as well as the special vulnerabilities of small island developing States. We are therefore pleased that those groups of countries received specific reference in the Outcome Document of 2005, thus emphasizing their particular needs and circumstances. The less fortunate must not be left behind. Special attention should be given to countries emerging from wars and undergoing a costly, complex and highly demanding post-conflict management process.

Croatia strongly supports yesterday's official launching of the International Drug Purchase Facility initiative. We see it as a significant step forward and express our hopes that all countries will render their contribution.

As a contributor to various United Nations programmes and funds, my country confirms its capacity to support the activities of the United Nations in numerous fields. We will increasingly continue to do so. During the past few years, Croatia has started to contribute voluntarily to a number of United Nations activities, programmes and bodies: the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to mention but a few. Being a small country, Croatia has limited financial and human resources, but that will not hinder us from sharing, helping and assisting.

Global economic and human development must remain in our focus, but as we meet today, the focus is very much on global tensions and instability. Today, many ongoing regional crises continue to cause great humanitarian tragedies around the world, seriously destabilizing regional and global security. Those arcs of instability are creating a network of fear and anger across many parts of the world. Terrorism is taking on new dimensions and forms. Weapons of mass destruction are yet another cause of grave concern. Economic imbalances and social impediments are becoming new sources of instability across the world. Religious divisions and misunderstandings add a new and dangerous dimension to insecurity in the world.

The significant growth of international terrorism has caused an unhealthy atmosphere of mistrust, religious and cultural intolerance, and grave infringements of human rights. Those consequences have in time developed into their own separate and extremely dangerous problems that exponentially threaten already fragile international relations.

The Republic of Croatia, as a member of the global anti-terrorist coalition, strongly condemns international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and, bearing in mind the ever-evolving threat of terrorism — especially weapons of mass destruction and cyber-terrorism — calls for even stronger global cooperation in the suppression of that modern-day scourge.

We must prove to our nations that we will stay firm and united against terrorism. In that light, a strong commitment to achieving a global consensus on a definition of terrorism and a final adoption of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism are very much needed and would reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in the suppression of terrorism. It that respect, we welcome the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, launched yesterday, and express our hope that all countries will implement it.

The Republic of Croatia has established very good cooperation with the United Nations, especially the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate. Additionally, on 15 and 16 May, a Monitoring Team for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) visited Croatia and met with representatives of all relevant Government bodies involved in the suppression of terrorism.

Year by year, we continue our great cooperation with the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, which has resulted in a recently held national expert workshop on international cooperation in criminal matters related to terrorism, organized through our joint cooperation in June this year in Valbandon, Croatia.

Weapons of mass destruction and a common approach to non-proliferation must remain our focus. Responsibility for world peace and security must continue to be the key guideline in dealing with that grave challenge. The rules and standards must be globally accepted and the United Nations and its specialized institutions and agencies must continue to play a pivotal role.

My country won its liberty only a decade ago. Aggression and crises in our part of Europe presented the entire international community with a new challenge at that time. Regional conflicts emerged as the new and disturbing roots of new dangers to international peace, and they remain a challenge in many parts of the world. In that light, stability and peace in South-East Europe and post-conflict management and cooperation must be viewed as a success for the international community and the countries involved.

My country played and continues to play a prominent and leading role in providing for long-term stability, cooperation and democratic development for all of South-East Europe, based on the commonly shared vision of a new, united and secure Europe. Already negotiating future full membership in the European Union, and based on the progress of reforms in the military and the security sector — as well as standing at the threshold of NATO membership — Croatia is today an anchor of stability, security and cooperation. Croatia is therefore an indispensable partner in the historical transformation of that often-troubled and critically important region for European and world peace, transforming it into a zone of modern society and democratic standards and values.

Croatia's specific position as a Central European, Danubian and Mediterranean country provides added value in bilateral and multilateral contacts and experience, stemming from its participation in numerous global, European and regional organizations and initiatives in the fields of security, democratic development and economic cooperation, including Croatia's current presidency of the South-East European Cooperation Process.

Stability, democratic development and cooperation, as well as the resolution of remaining open issues and completing the security architecture of that part of Europe, will also have to be closely linked to the indispensability of the protection and promotion of universal values, the rule of law, human rights and democracy, as well as their interrelationship with security and development.

Croatia supports efforts to accelerate democracy's movement around the world, particularly through such intergovernmental organizations as the Community of Democracies. Last year, as a signatory of the Warsaw Declaration of the Community of Democracies, the Republic of Croatia contributed to the founding of the United Nations Democracy Fund to reaffirm its commitment to encouraging other countries on their path to democratization.

Croatia welcomes the fact that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has begun work on its first cases. We attach great importance to the continuation of the ICC's successful work. Croatia also welcomes the fact that the number of States parties to the Rome Statute has reached and surpassed 100, and we hope that the number will continue to rise. The Republic of Croatia also supports the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in pursuing its completion strategy. Croatia continues to fully cooperate with the ICTY as part of our own advancement towards the rule of law, and also as an indicator and impetus for the region, with the aim of overcoming the legacy of the recent past in South-East Europe.

The Republic of Croatia has been a member of numerous United Nations bodies and very active in organizing and hosting conferences and other multilateral activities. My country is now ready to take the next step in strengthening our responsibility as a Member of the United Nations. For that reason, the Republic of Croatia has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2008-2009 at the elections to be held in 2007.

Croatia recognizes the importance of global multilateralism, as well as the growing significance of regional organizations in tackling the challenges of today's world. The role of the United Nations in the promotion of international cooperation for development and the achievement of the development goals agreed by the international community must remain fundamental, pivotal and re-energized. We also welcome the strengthening of coordination within the United Nations system, in close cooperation with all other multilateral financial, trade and development institutions, in order to support sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

Allow me to refer to one of the messages of the Outcome Document of last year's Summit — namely, the notion that there will be no development without security and no security without development. We acknowledge that peace and security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the basis of our collective security and

well-being. We recognize that development, peace, security and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. In facing that challenge, the United Nations system is called on to play an enhanced development role.

Croatia welcomes the inauguration of the Human Rights Council and considers it to be a milestone for the global promotion of human rights. My country also welcomes the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which arose from the need for a coordinated and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding.

My country is pleased to have been elected to the Peacebuilding Commission in May, and I would like to use this opportunity to thank all the States that voted for us and placed their confidence in Croatia. Our wish is to contribute actively to the United Nations system of collective security in an effective and transparent way, as embodied in the Charter and aligned with the Millennium Declaration.

Croatia welcomes another visible result of the efforts to reform the United Nations — the establishment of the Human Rights Council as the main standing body of the United Nations on human rights.

Now, allow me to share some remarks on one of the most important tasks we need to address.

In this fragile world, the need for an efficient and democratic world body is ever increasing. The Summit of heads of State and Government held in 2005 provided us with a platform for further action toward the reform of our Organization. There has been noted progress on several important reform issues, but we cannot be satisfied with the pace of the process. My country believes that the reform of the Organization and of the Security Council must justly take account of the interests of all. Croatia advocates the enlargement of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership, based on appropriate regional representation in which the Eastern European Group would have two non-permanent seats. It is of the utmost importance in a new, enlarged Council to have an appropriate number of representatives of the developing countries of the South and better representation of small and medium-sized countries.

Additionally, the reform of the Council should extend to its working methods and its interaction with other principal bodies of the Organization, first and most importantly the Economic and Social Council. That would strengthen the United Nations in a wide range of areas, including peace and security, development and human rights. There is also a need to improve United Nations management practices and working methods to raise the whole system to a higher level of transparency and accountability.

Mindful that peace and security are prerequisites for economic and social prosperity, Croatia would like to remain engaged in and responsive to current concerns on reforming the United Nations system in order to make it a stronger and more effective Organization for times to come. That is our common responsibility. We need to act today in order to prepare ourselves in a timely manner for the challenges of tomorrow.

Although one third of the entire Millennium Development Goals period is already behind us, the targets set are, regrettably, not being met at the desired pace. That must be changed as a matter of urgency, as it is undoubtedly an issue affecting the future security and stability of the world. We must move forward in assisting developing countries and other countries in need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

As I mentioned at the outset of my address, Croatia has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2008-2009, the elections for which are to be held in 2007. I feel the need to stress that Croatia's candidacy is, above all, a measure of Croatia's responsibility.

I have mentioned the fragility of today's world. I have not mentioned the fragility, uncertainties and challenges that Croatia experienced in the recent past. They are well known, but at the same time they are the source of our understanding of and responsiveness to the needs of a fragile world. We believe that we can contribute to building a new cooperative world in responding to our new challenges and to enhancing our Organization. Croatian membership in the Security Council would also serve as a telling demonstration of the success of the peace process in South-East Europe.

My country went through a successful transition from being a country receiving peacekeeping forces to one that is now a contributor to 11 of the 18 United Nations peacekeeping operations in various regions

throughout the world. Croatia also provides training and hosts international courses in the field of peacebuilding. We are therefore well aware of the added value that countries that have rebuilt their national capacities bring to the credibility of such an important body for the cause of international peace, security and development. Croatia stands determined to continue to support peace efforts and a strengthened United Nations role on a regional and global level.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to convey to Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, on behalf of the State of Kuwait, its Government and people, our most sincere congratulations to her personally and to her brotherly country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, on her election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We assure her of our readiness to cooperate with her seriously and constructively as she assumes her heavy responsibilities.

I cannot fail to mention here, with great appreciation and admiration, the prominent role of the Secretary-General in his ongoing efforts at the helm of this Organization to enhance and energize the work of its various bodies and to make them more democratic, transparent and capable of meeting the challenges of this century, and more effective in carrying out the duties assigned to them in the fields of peace, security and development.

In that context, Kuwait welcomes the Republic of Montenegro as a new Member of the United Nations.

In the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, our leaders expressed their firm belief and conviction in the important role of this Organization as an umbrella for multilateral work. They drew a road map for us to follow as we seek solutions to the major international threats and challenges that threaten international peace and security, such as terrorism, the deterioration of the environment, human rights violations, poverty, hunger and the spread of such dangerous and infectious diseases as AIDS and malaria.

Of great concern is the emergence of new challenges to international peace and security that are no less dangerous than those aforementioned, such as the incitement of hatred, xenophobia, insults to religions, including Islamophobia, together with all kinds of racial, ethnic and religious discrimination.

A year after the adoption of the Outcome Document, and despite the extensive efforts made to follow-up the implementation of the Summit's resolutions, there is still an urgent need to redouble the efforts to achieve our objectives in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, counter-terrorism, setting a balance between developed and developing countries in international trade, and reform of the Security Council to enhance its authority and efficiency and give greater transparency and fairness to its decisions by according due consideration to the representation of the small States that make up more than half the membership of the United Nations.

The State of Kuwait hopes that efforts will be enhanced to promote dialogue and advance international coordination and cooperation to overcome the problems that impede the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in various regions of the world. Kuwait will maintain its course in adhering to the provisions, principles and purposes of international agreements and conventions.

While we take pride in the social, economic and political development that has been achieved in Kuwait, as reflected in the annual international reports issued by the specialized agencies of the United Nations, we will not be distracted from pursuing our efforts to further improve the social and economic conditions that favour the Kuwaiti citizen's standard of living and prosperity. In that context, Kuwait will continue to support, within its means, the efforts of many developing countries to achieve their development goals. It will continue to do so through the Kuwaiti Fund for Economic Development, which finances infrastructure projects by granting soft loans, which to date amount to $12 billion and have benefited more than 100 countries around the world.

Kuwait also contributes to the funding of development projects in developing countries through

United Nations programmes and specialized agencies, and regional organizations and associations. Within the framework of supporting international efforts to eradicate poverty, Kuwait announced last month that it will provide $300 million to the Islamic Development Bank to combat poverty in Africa.

Kuwait follows with grave concern the difficult security conditions in brotherly Iraq resulting from ongoing terrorist acts that target the Iraqi people, State institutions and economic and social facilities. Despite progress in the political process that has led to the formation of a constitutionally elected Government, the difficult security conditions impede similar progress in rebuilding what the previous regime destroyed as a result of its hostile policies towards its own people and its neighbours.

Kuwait reiterates its commitment to all relevant Security Council resolutions and vows to continue supporting the efforts of the Iraqi Government to promote democracy and respect for human rights, to rebuild, confront security problems and achieve national harmony between the various segments of the Iraqi people. We hope that the international community will also redouble its efforts in support of the efforts of the Iraqi Government and the League of Arab States to achieve security and stability in Iraq, which in turn will contribute to consolidating peace and security in the region. There is no doubt that a democratic, secure, stable and economically prosperous Iraq that respects human rights, is a master over its own decisions, without any interference in its internal affairs, and lives in peace with its neighbours will be in the interest of all the States of the region without exception. That is what Kuwait hopes for and seeks to achieve.

At the regional level, with regard to the issue of the three disputed Emirati islands, Kuwait supports the position of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council and hopes that negotiations will resume and intensify at all levels between the brotherly United Arab Emirates and the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran to find a solution to that conflict in conformity with the principles and rules of international law and good-neighbourly relations, which would enhance the security and stability of the region.

Concerning the Iranian nuclear issue, Kuwait calls on all the concerned parties to spare the region any crisis that could undermine the security and stability of that vital region, which for the past two decades has been the theatre of conflicts and wars that have squandered the fortunes and resources of its countries and delayed their development. We therefore hope that action will be taken to resolve the crisis by diplomatic means. We urge the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the international community in order to dispel any fears or doubts surrounding the nature and aims of its nuclear programme.

In that context, we affirm our position on the need to make the Middle East, including the Gulf region, an area free from all weapons of mass destruction. That zone must include Israel, which must accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subject all its nuclear facilities to the safeguards regime of the IAEA.

In recent weeks, the brotherly Republic of Lebanon was subject to a vicious Israeli aggression that killed hundreds of innocent civilians, injured thousands of others, and made more than 1 million people refugees. Kuwait immediately and very strongly condemned those shameful and inhumane crimes against the brotherly people of Lebanon. Proceeding from its sense of duty and responsibility, and driven by close brotherly relations, the Government and people of Kuwait organized emergency relief operations to alleviate the suffering of the Lebanese people through the Kuwaiti Red Crescent society, other associations and the private sector. Kuwait also announced the donation of $324 million to the efforts to rebuild Lebanon.

While Kuwait welcomes the measures taken by the international community to implement Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), it calls on Israel to cease its repeated aggressions against Lebanon and to respect its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Kuwait also calls on the international community to assist the Lebanese Government to extend its control over all Lebanese territory and to support its endeavours to recover all of its rights, including compensation for its losses as a result of the Israeli aggression.

The core of the Middle East crisis is the Palestinian question. That issue, regrettably, remains stalled. International endeavours and efforts to move it forward are met with Israel's intransigence and refusal to implement international resolutions, as well as its

disregard for international conventions and the agreements it has signed with the concerned parties within the framework of the peace process.

The continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories will always be a source of tension and instability in the Middle East. Israel's repeated military incursions in the occupied territories, oppressive practices against the Palestinian people, and undermining of the Palestinian Authority will not benefit the Israeli Government, nor will its continued aggression and deliberate destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and national Palestinian institutions secure its so-called security. The solution lies in resolving the root causes of the problem and by restoring usurped rights so that all the peoples of the region can enjoy peace and stability.

In that context, we renew our full support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to recover its lawful political rights and establish its own independent State over its own land with Jerusalem as its capital. We demand that the Israeli Government withdraw from all the Arab lands it occupies, including the Syrian Golan Heights, in implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. In that respect, we reiterate the importance of the Arab peace initiative adopted in Beirut in 2002 as the only strategic option for achieving a permanent, just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Since its founding, the United Nations has registered numerous accomplishments and demonstrated its efficacy in establishing peace and security in various parts of the world. It has helped prevent many problems from deteriorating and it has thereby become an indispensable tool of the international community in confronting global issues and challenges. It is our hope that the United Nations record of accomplishment in achieving peace and security will soon include Iraq, the Middle East, the Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan and other countries that are still experiencing conflicts and wars that have killed countless numbers of their citizens, depleted their resources, destroyed their capacities and delayed their march towards development and progress.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Tzipi Livni, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel.

Ms. Livni (Israel): These days, the days of the general debate of the General Assembly, fall this year at a time of unique significance for the Jewish people. They come on the eve of the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement and are known as the Days of Awe.

In Jewish tradition, these are days of soul-searching and prayer, of judgement and of renewal. That concept of reflection is fitting not just for the faithful. It should be a time of reflection for nations as well. Let us use this time and this gathering to look deeply and honestly at the world in which we live — the world as it is and as it might be. The United Nations emerged from the horrors of war and offered a vision of a new and peaceful world, but we see the suffering of the people of Darfur, we see bloodshed and violence across the globe, and we know that that is not yet the world in which we live.

Our planet remains torn by conflict. At its heart, this is a conflict about values — a battle of ideas. It is a conflict about whether to respect or to reject the other — a conflict between tolerance and tyranny, between the promise of coexistence and the hopelessness of hate. We see it played out in internet chat rooms and in houses of prayer, in classrooms and newsrooms, on the battlefield and in the corridors of power. It is the challenge of our time.

We, the people of Israel, have lived for many years on the frontlines of this conflict. Our nation has felt its fury, our soldiers have fought and died in its battles. An ancient people in the heart of the Middle East — great in history but small in number — we have been a constant target of those that oppose our very existence. We face this conflict on different fronts — as Jews against the dark forces of anti-Semitism, as Israelis against the enemies of our statehood, and as members of the free world against the merchants of global terror.

We have been guided in this conflict by two core values that are embodied in our declaration of independence and shape our national identity. The first is that Israel, with Jerusalem at its heart, is the national homeland of the Jewish people, their refuge from persecution, their first and last line of defence. The second is that Israel is a democracy and that the values of justice, peace and humanity — first expressed by the prophets of Israel — are an integral part of our nation's sense of mission. We share the same values as the community of democratic States. We are ready and proud to be judged by them. They are our own.

But too often there is a gap between perception and reality. Too often, Israel is not seen for its unique creativity and spirit of enterprise, or for its contribution — well beyond its size — to the sciences and to literature, to human development and innovation. In many parts of the world, we are seen mainly through the lens of the Arab-Israeli conflict. And too often, that lens is distorted. To many, this conflict is portrayed as a clash of David and Goliath, with Israel perceived unjustly as Goliath, but this simplistic image ignores the fact that Israel remains a threatened democracy in a hostile region.

We have, of necessity, the capacity to defend ourselves, but we will always be constrained in its use by our values. And yet, we face an enemy willing to use all the means at its disposal to kill without restraint and without distinction. Every innocent casualty in this conflict is a tragedy. There is no difference between the tears of a grieving Israeli mother and a grieving Palestinian mother, but there is a critical moral difference between the terrorists who hunt down civilians and the soldiers who target terrorists while trying to avoid civilian casualties.

To protect its integrity, the international community must uphold that basic moral distinction. Terror is terror, even when it is called resistance. It cannot be justified and it cannot be equated with the actions of those seeking only to defend themselves against it.

If we want to protect our values, it is not enough to believe in them — we must act according to them. There is no greater challenge to our values than that posed by the leaders of Iran. They deny and mock the Holocaust. They speak proudly and openly of their desire to wipe Israel off the map. And now, by their actions, they pursue the weapons to achieve that objective, to imperil the region and to threaten the world. The moment of truth is here.

The international community is faced with no greater responsibility than to stand against that dark and growing danger — not for Israel's sake, but for its own, for the sake of the values it claims to embrace, for the sake of the world we all wish our children to inherit. What more needs to happen for the world to take the threat seriously? What more needs to happen to end the hesitation and the excuses? We know the lessons of the past. We know the consequences of appeasement and indifference. There is no place for such leaders in this forum. There is no place for such a regime in the family of nations.

For any who still had doubts, the Iranian threat was exposed to all in the recent conflict in Lebanon. Armed, financed and directed by Iran, Hizbullah kidnapped Israeli soldiers and targeted Israeli cities, but it was the hopes of an entire region that they sought to take hostage. Out of the conflict — and because of Israel's response to it — opportunity has emerged, but much is needed to turn opportunity into reality. Hizbullah can never again be allowed to threaten the future of the region. The world faces a critical test — to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the immediate and safe release of the Israeli hostages.

As we gather here, we think of anxious families that ache for the return of their loved ones — parents waiting for a son, a brother for a brother, a wife for a husband. Israel will not rest until all the Israeli hostages are returned safely to the arms of their devoted families and to the embrace of a loving nation. Let us all make them the same promise today.

Last year, a great leader of Israel, Ariel Sharon, stood before this forum and said:

> "The Palestinians will always be our neighbours. We respect them and have no aspirations to rule over them. They are also entitled to freedom and to a national, sovereign existence in a State of their own." (*A/60/PV.5, p.46*)

That was not only the voice and vision of one man. It is the voice and vision of a nation. We do not believe that Israeli-Palestinian relations are of necessity a zero-sum game. Not every Israeli interest is at odds with Palestinian interests. There is, in fact, a common vision that binds together Israelis, moderate Palestinians and the international community. It serves the goals of both peoples and represents the basis of a genuine and lasting peace. At its heart is the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Israel believes in this vision, and from this vision we have drawn our principles for peace.

The first is inherent in the very idea of two States. For the Jewish people, Israel was established to be our national homeland. It was the solution for Jewish refugees and the realization of Jewish rights. And this is the true calling of the future State of

Palestine: a national homeland for the Palestinian people — the solution to Palestinian claims, the fulfilment of Palestinian dreams, the answer for Palestinian refugees, wherever they may be. If Palestinian leaders are unwilling to say this, the world should say it for them. Instead of giving false hope, it is time to end the exploitation of the refugee issue and to begin to resolve it on the basis of the vision of two States, two homelands.

That is the real and only meaning of the two-State vision. It requires each people to accept that their rights are realized through the establishment of their own homeland, not in the homeland of others.

The second principle for peace is drawn from the concept of living in peace and security. On the basis of this principle the international community has insisted that the State of Palestine that emerges next to Israel cannot be a terror State. A terrorist State is the last thing our troubled region needs. It is for that reason that the road map requires an end to terror. It is for that reason that the international community has demanded that any Palestinian Government fulfil three basic conditions: renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist and accept existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements. Those conditions are not an obstacle to peace or to the establishment of a responsible Palestinian State; they are a crucial ingredient for the realization of those goals.

An end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will also require agreement on a common boundary. There are those who believe that if only we could turn back the hands of time to 1967 all would be resolved. But, in 1967 there was no Palestinian State; there was no link between the West Bank and Gaza; and there was no commitment to lasting peace. A two-State solution requires the creation of a new reality which never existed in the past. For it to succeed, both sides will need to commit themselves to compromise and to believe in coexistence.

If only we could end the conflict today. But we have learned from bitter experience that to reach lasting peace it is not enough to have a vision. Peace must be built on the solid foundations of shared values, not the shifting sands of false promises. Without this, the political horizon will always be out of reach. We have seen negotiations doomed by mistrust and frustration. We have seen them lay the ground for greater violence, not greater understanding. We cannot afford to repeat that experience.

Unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority is dominated today by a terrorist organization that teaches children to hate and seeks to transform the conflict from a resolvable political dispute into an endless religious confrontation. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the consequence and not the cause of this ideology of intolerance and hatred. We cannot reach peace by ignoring these realities. We cannot find the solutions for tomorrow without addressing the problems of today.

But we also cannot give up hope, and I refuse to do so. In a Middle East where being moderate is often the same as being weak, our challenge is to empower the peacemakers and disempower their opponents. The road map phases and the three international conditions are designed precisely for that purpose. But if the world hesitates in enforcing these standards, the extremists sense opportunity. And if it appeases, they sense victory. This is the moment for determination not half-measures and vague formulations. It is the moment to demand that those Palestinian leaders that believe in peace determine the future on these terms, not on the terms of terrorists.

Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts on the road to peace. But stagnation is not in our interest, and it is not our policy.

It is in this spirit that Israel embarked on the painful process of disengagement, to create an opportunity for progress. But, sadly, we received terror in return. And it is in this spirit that I met with Chairman Abbas two days ago, and we agreed to re-energize the dialogue between us and create a permanent channel to pursue ways to advance together. The parties do not need another forum to act out their differences, and the only forum that will resolve them is the bilateral negotiating table. We have no illusions about the difficulties before us. We must face them not ignore them. But we can advance along the road to peace if we have the strength to defend its principles and the courage to confront its enemies.

In these days, while Jews prepare to welcome a new year, Muslims around the world prepare for the holy month of Ramadan. As two great faiths begin their annual journey of reflection and renewal, let the nations of the world begin it too.

The Jewish prayers tell us that this is a time of decision not just for individuals but also for States: "which for the sword and which for peace, which for famine and which for plenty".

Those are sobering words, but they are also empowering ones. The message of these special days is that no future is predetermined, no conflict is inevitable. It is up to us to make the right choices. History will judge us by them. In the words of the traditional greeting: may the curses of the last year end, may the blessing of the new year begin. Shana tova: may it be a good year.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Karel de Gucht, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. De Gucht (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Just one year ago, our heads of State or Government gathered in this Assembly and reaffirmed that peace, security, development and human rights are closely interlinked. They also reaffirmed their faith in multilateralism and an international order based upon the rule of law. The mandate they entrusted to us is being implemented progressively. We have established the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council and adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Our expectations are high and we hope that the results will meet them.

During the past year, we have witnessed a rebirth of multilateralism, and I am happy about that. What we, the Member States of the United Nations, do together in a multilateral way will by definition enjoy greater legitimacy. I have in mind in particular, the recent conflict between Israel and Lebanon, a conflict in which the Security Council fully assumed its responsibilities — and of which the good offices of the Secretary-General must eventually guarantee a lasting political settlement.

Likewise, it is worth noting that international dialogue, rather than the use of force, is again in the forefront of multilateral diplomacy. Here I have in mind the case of Iran: we must make every effort to resolve the difficult nuclear issue while fully respecting the principles of the Charter and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

That being said, multilateralism, as I see it, is neither a dogma nor a simple profession of faith. Multilateralism is an instrument that should be judged by its impact on world issues. In order to be effective, it must deliver results. Only action can legitimize its raison d'être.

Yesterday morning the President of Finland addressed the General Assembly on behalf of the European Union (see A/61/PV.10). I entirely endorse her statement. I will now address a few issues which are of particular importance to Belgium.

The Middle East has just experienced one of the worst crises in recent years. A military approach has led to unacceptable sacrifices by civilians, both in Lebanon and in Israel. In the face of such a crisis, Belgium and its European partners have clearly demonstrated their willingness to act and have answered the successive appeals of the Secretary-General. Belgium, for its part, has contributed to the emergency fund to support the Lebanese Government's reconstruction projects. But above all, Belgium has decided to participate in the reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), requested by Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). In the coming weeks, 400 Belgian Blue Helmets will be deployed in southern Lebanon.

But the international community's efforts must not stop there. All elements of the Security Council resolution must be urgently implemented. I salute the efforts of the Secretary-General and of the States involved, which have brought an end to the blockade. The two kidnapped Israeli soldiers must also be immediately released. Likewise, we have to work on a solution for the release of the Lebanese prisoners in Israel. And above all, the arms embargo must effectively be implemented. Finally, the Lebanese Government must fully exercise its sovereignty and its control throughout its territory. It has our full support in that process.

The implementation of Council resolution 1701 (2006) shows, moreover, that the European Union is becoming more involved in the quest for a lasting peace in the Middle East. That is a welcome development.

We all agree that lasting peace is predicated on a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore we must work on all measures which could rapidly open a path towards the resumption of the dialogue, an end to the hostilities, security guarantees for both parties, the liberation of the abducted Israeli soldier,

the release of the political leaders arrested during the crisis, humanitarian access, the re-establishment of basic services, a start to reconstruction and the transfer of the tax and customs income due to the Palestinian authorities.

We support the efforts of the President of the Palestinian Authority to form a government of national unity. Nevertheless, we will be attentive to the content of its platform and to its response to the three conditions set by the Quartet.

I share the assessment of the Secretary-General: in the already tense environment of the Middle East, the region can absolutely not afford a new major crisis. Given the widespread and justified suspicion aroused by the Iranian nuclear programme, I appeal to the sense of responsibility of the Tehran authorities to respond positively to the offers for negotiation made to them. Iran is a great country, with an ancient and esteemed civilization. That heritage, as well as its role in the region, must encourage Iran to promote peace and security and to rebuild confidence with its regional partners, rather than isolating itself through useless provocations. Iran must again take its place in the community of nations and follow the rules that govern international relations. Iran must comply with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1696 (2006).

A first round of presidential elections and legislative elections were recently held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thanks to the combined efforts of the Congolese authorities, civil society and the international community. It was quite a challenge. The Congolese people voted in an orderly fashion and in great numbers, and thereby demonstrated a sense of public responsibility and a desire to exercise their democratic rights.

I pay tribute to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) for the positive role it played, assisted by the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR), in controlling the skirmishes that occurred at the end of the first round. The electoral process now has to be completed; there is no other option. Calm must return, and the protagonists must commit themselves, in good faith, to applying the rules of democracy. The international community must continue to support the process.

However, the elections are but a first step. Next, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has to establish solid and reliable institutions that are ready to shoulder their responsibilities to the benefit of the people. The potential resources of the Congo are enormous, and so are the challenges ahead in the reconstruction of the country. It is crucial that the new authorities unambiguously demonstrate their commitment to good governance, both political and economic.

The international community has been a loyal partner for the Congo during this transition. Its support and collaboration, particularly through MONUC, will remain paramount throughout the establishment of the new institutions. I hope that the international community will be able to continue a constructive dialogue with the new Congolese authorities to the benefit of peace, stability and development of the Congo and of the region.

Following the democratic elections that ended the transition period in Burundi took place, the people of Burundi and the international community had high hopes for the prospect of stability and development in that country. That is why we welcomed the recent ceasefire reached with the Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL) movement. I fear, however, that those hopes might be dashed. The Government's reactions towards the press and the opposition, as well as its management of public affairs, have cast a shadow over the evolution of the democratic process.

The Secretary-General himself expressed his concerns very clearly about the situation in Burundi. The development partners and the regional partners share those concerns. All possible means must be used to consolidate the democratic process in Burundi as well as its development potential. Democracy must be fully exercised, and responsible media, and a responsible civil society, are key elements in that respect. The rule of law must be strengthened, in the interest and with the participation of all. From that perspective, a dialogue with national political partners is indispensable. The new Government has a vital role in this respect. The new Peacebuilding Commission will provide us with opportunities to hold a frank and open dialogue on all these issues.

As all are aware, these days our Organization is devoting greater attention to States emerging from conflict that are in a period of transition. The danger of new tensions in such still-fragile States is very real. Free and democratic elections are important, but they are only one part of the process of rebuilding the rule

of law. We cannot lose sight of the way in which power is really exercised. We must rebuild States so that they are able to assume their responsibilities towards their neighbours and their own peoples. They must be able to defend their sovereignty and their borders without threatening the stability of their partners; they must have professional and loyal armies at their disposal; and in such States, power must be exercised not to the benefit of the few but to respond to the aspirations of the people. Good governance should be at the centre of the process.

Since the beginning of this year Belgium has held the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. Its principles and values are the same as those of the United Nations. Its fields of action are very similar and complementary; they include promotion of human rights, democratization, protection of minorities, conflict prevention, crisis management and protection of the environment, not to mention dialogue among civilizations, the combat against the proliferation of small arms, and electoral monitoring.

The OSCE played a key role in maintaining the relationship between the two parts of Europe divided by the cold war. Since that time, the organization has elaborated a number of norms, principles and commitments that unite all its members, which contributes to reinforcing their collective security.

One of the objectives of our chairmanship was to strengthen the balance between the three dimensions of the OSCE: political and military, economic, and humanitarian. We have tried, where possible, to establish in those areas synergies with the United Nations, on issues such as the problems of landlocked countries, combating organized crime and combating terrorism. During its chairmanship, Belgium has worked actively to contribute to a solution to so-called frozen conflicts. But such solutions will be possible only if can count on the genuine will of all parties concerned to move forward.

Some of the criticisms levelled at the United Nations are justified, and we must therefore pursue the reform process, which must above all strengthen the legitimacy, effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations. Those criticisms should not minimize the successes the United Nations has to its credit. Here I am referring to the dramatic increase in the number of peacekeeping operations.

On the other hand, poverty is decreasing worldwide, thanks in particular to the dramatic progress made in Asia. While the trend of increasing poverty has not yet been reversed in sub-Saharan Africa, the 2006 report on the Millennium Development Goals stresses that many African countries are now showing long-term growth potential that could improve the standard of living of their peoples.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay a very sincere tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. He has worked tirelessly, placing his political and negotiating skills in the service of peace, development and human rights. I wish to express my deep gratitude for the dedication he has shown at the helm of our Organization.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda.

Mr. Kutesa (Uganda): Let me first of all congratulate Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am confident that, with her wealth of experience, she will guide our deliberations effectively. I wish also to thank her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden, for the manner in which he presided over the high-level segment of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

Let me also pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his leadership of our Organization. His 10-year tenure has been marked by fundamental changes. The United Nations has witnessed major reforms geared at creating a more efficient and effective institution. We are confident that he will leave behind a more vibrant Organization, capable of meeting the challenges of our time.

As a firm supporter of multilateralism, Uganda believes that the Assembly is the most appropriate forum for addressing issues of global concern. A great number of important decisions have been taken by the Assembly. Landmark agreements have been reached and important commitments undertaken by members of the Assembly.

In spite of all these efforts, threats to global peace and security and to human dignity are more serious

than ever before. This situation obtains today because we have yet to start addressing the real root causes of the problems facing us. My delegation believes that ensuring global peace will continue to be an uphill task for us as long as the majority in developing countries and elsewhere in the world continue to suffer the indignity of poverty and deprivation while we continue to think that it is business as usual.

We must ask ourselves why a large number of international problems that are high on the agenda of the United Nations are occurring in the developing part of the world. These are real issues that affect the daily lives of peoples, and they require urgent solutions which have been to date been far too slow in coming.

The onus is on the Assembly to ensure that what we agree upon or commit ourselves to doing is done in a timely manner. The Millennium Declaration that we adopted here 6 years ago (resolution 55/2) remains an important milestone because it introduced a new paradigm shift from emphasis on statement of commitments to action. However, there have been some obstacles to the achievement of the goals we set for ourselves.

In areas where progress has been made, due credit must be given. In that regard, Uganda welcomes the establishment of the Human Rights Council to work alongside the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. We are also pleased that action was promptly taken to create the Peacebuilding Commission as an important intergovernmental mechanism to assist countries in transition from war to durable peace. We welcome those as important contributions to the reform agenda of the United Nations.

While commendable progress has been achieved in other areas of reform, great frustration remains over the reform and expansion of the Security Council. In my delegation's view, the expansion of the Security Council is the most important facet of United Nations reform with regard to the maintenance of global peace and security.

It is now a truism that the Security Council does not reflect today's geopolitical realities, but only the balance of power that prevailed in the 1940s. Africa is the only continent with no permanent member on the Security Council, despite its size and population. That is why Africa is demanding at least two permanent seats on the Council. We acknowledge that the existence of the veto is an anachronism, but as long as it exists we should demand it, because do not want to join as second-class members, with no veto.

Lack of agreement on how to move the development agenda forward is one of our major concerns. It is unacceptable for big sections of the global community to continue living on less than one dollar per day while we have the capacity and the means to pull them out of that abject poverty. We must address that problem as a matter of urgency. One way of doing so is to live by our own commitments, as reflected, for example, in the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Brussels Plan of Action, et cetera, et cetera. We must put in place measurable benchmarks to realize those goals.

It is disappointing to see that very little progress has been made to date on official development assistance, on foreign direct investments, on debts, or even on market access. The stalled conclusion of the World Trade Organization development agenda is a case in point. The Doha Development Round was launched as a process that would eventually give developing countries a fair chance to compete in the world marketplace. It was expected to restore the momentum of the open market while giving genuine priority to the concerns and interests of developing countries. Five years down the road, we have not agreed on opening up markets or eliminating discriminative subsidies.

My delegation strongly feels that part of that failure is attributable to the multilateral system's lack of good global governance, poor coordination and lack of coherence. As the United Nations has a responsibility to identify the causes hindering the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Organization is the right body to track implementation of commitments undertaken by development partners. An effective mechanism should be devised for doing that.

Uganda calls on the international community, and the United Nations in particular, to explore new and more effective ways of promoting consensus on issues of vital importance to the peace, security and prosperity of our global community. In that regard, we would like to welcome and encourage the holding of

the high-level events that have been organized alongside this session.

The High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held last week has produced important outcomes that are going to be valuable in the formulation of policies on international migration and development. In the same light, the convening of the High-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries is a welcome decision as it will feed into the midterm review.

With regard to Africa's development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development — NEPAD — is the key framework for action. We continue to urge development partners to support Africa's efforts by contributing positively and effectively to the implementation of that regional development strategy. Of the United Nations system in particular we request that the funding that comes from United Nations development systems should focus on Africa's priorities as determined by the partner States, while care should be taken to avoid diversion of development resources to other donor-driven activities.

I would like now to briefly turn my attention to the situation in our region. Uganda's security and development is directly interlinked with developments in the Great Lakes region. We are therefore fully committed to the realization of peace and security, and have continued to play a key role in the search for durable peace and security in our region.

We welcome the positive developments in the southern Sudan following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We fully support the democratic process being pursued in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call upon all parties involved to have full confidence in the process so that it can be successfully completed. The regional initiative on Burundi under Uganda's chairmanship has made steady progress, and we have full confidence in its success.

Uganda also wishes to appeal to the international community, especially our development partners, to support the peace initiatives in the region by contributing generously to the success of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, initiated by the United Nations in collaboration with the African Union.

With regard to Somalia, we call for international support for the Transitional Federal Government. We call on the Security Council to support the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace process and the partial lifting of the arms embargo to enable deployment of the IGAD Peace Support Mission to Somalia and the African Union forces.

At the national level, in Uganda there is an organization called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a terrorist group with no political agenda, which has for a number of years unleashed terror on the population of northern Uganda, killing and maiming people and abducting children for training as killers and use as sex slaves. The LRA has now been defeated and its remnants have fled to Garamba Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government of Uganda has now entered into peace talks with the LRA under the mediation of the Government of southern Sudan with a view to restoring peace and stability.

After a careful analysis of the situation, the Government of Uganda decided to take the painful decision to offer amnesty to the LRA top leadership, in order to facilitate the peace talks. That decision was painful in the sense that we do not condone or tolerate impunity whatsoever. However, we are convinced that the alternative traditional justice system that we intend to apply is an equitable solution and should be given a chance. We call on the international community to support the process that we have embarked on. We are determined to resolve the conflict peacefully. Peace is what our people want, and it is peace that we are determined to give them.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abubakr Al-Qirbi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Qirbi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session on her election. It is a source of pride for us that an Arab woman from brotherly Bahrain is presiding over the session. I would also like to thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the Assembly at its sixtieth session, for his valuable and tireless efforts in the conduct of our work and for the positive results he has achieved for our Organization, particularly with regard to United Nations reform. I would also like to warmly welcome

the Republic of Montenegro as the 192nd Member of our international family.

I am pleased that this meeting coincides with a new democratic achievement in my country, Yemen. Today, 20 September, the second direct presidential election and elections for local councils have taken place competitively in a free and fair atmosphere. This democratic exercise demonstrates the maturity of the people of Yemen and reflects our country's commitment to democracy as a peaceful means of sharing power and popular participation in development and economic and social reform.

The recent developments in Lebanon and Palestine include the destruction of Lebanon's infrastructure owing to aggression by the Israeli war machine — which has caused the deaths of countless innocent civilians, mainly women, children and the elderly — threats to murder or assassinate the leadership of Lebanon and Palestine, extrajudicial and other practices. These all run counter to the United Nations Charter, the rules of international law and international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The massacres committed by the Israeli war machine against Lebanese and Palestinian civilians — particularly the Qana II massacre, whose victims were mostly children under the age of 12 and which was witnessed by the entire world — have evoked feelings of denunciation and condemnation by all people. This requires a firmer stance in the face of Israeli policies based on violence and State terrorism.

It is even more regrettable that the United Nations stands by and watches helplessly while the Lebanese people are subjected to devastation and destruction caused by Israeli aggression over 34 days. We would like to reiterate that the implementation of Security Council 1701 (2006) should not undermine the territorial integrity of Lebanon and should not lead to sectarian divisions among the people of that country. It should also mandate that Israel compensate Lebanon for all the destruction.

Israeli practices, such as assassinations of Palestinian individuals, detention of the President of the Palestinian Parliament, the Deputy Prime Minister or other Ministers, are a perfect example of Israel's total disregard for international law, human rights, or agreements signed with the Palestinian Authority. This makes it incumbent upon the Security Council to firmly deal with such Israeli aggression, to demand the release of all Palestinian leaders under detention and in Israeli prisons, and to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict neutrally and responsibly. It is only thus that the Middle East can enjoy stability and Israel can enjoy security.

In order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, Arab countries have requested that the Security Council consider the Arab-Israeli conflict file responsibly and fairly in order to put an end to the conflict and to spare the region further wars and conflicts. If the Security Council fails to do that, then it will bear the responsibility for continuing the conflict in the region, with the attendant suffering and dire consequences for all parties concerned.

From this rostrum, we call upon the international community to stand beside the elected Iraqi Government, to help it spread its authority over its territory, to put an end to violence and interference by external parties in the internal affairs of Iraq, to respect the territorial integrity of Iraq and to put an end to its occupation.

With regard to the Sudan, we reiterate our support for the efforts by the Sudanese Government to bring peace to Darfur, in accordance with the security plan presented to the Security Council. The decision to extend the mandate of the African Union forces until the end of December of this year is welcome. Provision of adequate logistics and increasing the number of these peacekeeping forces will enable them to play their role. The dispatch of any international forces without the agreement of the Government of the Sudan constitutes a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter.

With regard to Somalia, Yemen would like to commend the Arab-African efforts for conciliation between the Transitional Somali Government and the Union of Islamic Shariah Courts, and the outcome of the talks held at Khartoum under the sponsorship of the League of Arab States from 1 to 5 September. We call upon all international parties to provide support to the Somali Government so as to enable it to reconstruct the country and re-establish State institutions. Yemen has always been a partner in the conciliation process and supports all efforts by all parties. Yemen emphasizes that any external interference in Somalia's affairs could lead to violence and confrontation in the Horn of Africa.

Yemen underlines the right of all countries to possess nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. We have reiterated our commitment to the General Assembly declaration to make the Middle East a region free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and to compel Israel to comply with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in order to guarantee stability in the region and to avoid a nuclear race.

Given our concern for the promotion of trust among all countries seeking to develop their nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, we call upon all to cooperate in the creation of a joint entity for nuclear research for peaceful purposes, in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Yemen has reiterated its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We believe that this phenomenon, which is alien to our societies and to the religion of Islam, can be attributed to many factors, including a feeling of lack of international justice, the spread of misleading judgements and decrees, and misconceptions of others based on race or religion. Such factors have undermined trust among people and have led to the spread of extremism and terrorism.

An international conference should be convened to reach an agreement on an accurate definition of terrorism and to deal with its root causes, such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education and the absence of international justice. A distinction should also be made between terror against innocent civilians and the legitimate right of people to resist foreign occupation.

The Republic of Yemen would like to reiterate its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 and to the Monterrey Consensus. We are convinced that the mobilization of financial resources for development and their effective use in developing countries and in countries with economies in transition are essential for the realization of a genuine global partnership for development.

We would like to stress here the need to grant developing countries greater freedom in the development and management of their development programmes, in accordance with their national priorities and their special situations, in conformity with international strategies for development.

Based on our belief that the individual should be the focus of development and its ultimate objective, we have given utmost priority to the MDGs and have mainstreamed them in our policies and five-year development plan, 2006-2010, as well as integrated them into the economic, environmental and social aspects of our plans.

We have thus adopted a series of measures and actions for reform in the financial, administrative and judicial fields, the most recent of which is the total separation of the judiciary power from the executive power and the appointment of an independent chief judge of the country's judicial authority. We have also involved civil society organizations, which are key partners in economic and political development and progress, and have cooperated with donor countries, specialized agencies and international organizations in the implementation of our second five-year plan for the alleviation of poverty. That plan is based on small projects and on the expansion of technical education, the provision of basic services, the promotion of good governance and the fight against corruption. It is an ambitious plan that we believe requires international support in order to achieve its objective and result in a qualitative leap in human development in Yemen.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we must review the system of international relations to base it more on trust, dialogue and cooperation. We all are in agreement that democracy and the enjoyment of freedoms are at the core of desired reform, and here I should like to stress that the reform of national and of international policies are two sides of the same coin.

Democracy in international relations helps to promote democracy in national policies and is a genuine motive for it. That requires that the United Nations itself be an example to follow in terms of the exercise of democracy. Thus reform and restructuring of the United Nations is required, as well as its revitalization and the restoration of its international standing and prestige, including through the expansion of the membership of the Security Council to include representation by all continents. That should be done in an equitable manner that guarantees representation by all cultures and civilizations and also assigns a more prominent role to the Economic and Social Council in elaborating international policies relating to economic and social issues and in the follow-up of their implementation. It should be done also in a manner that promotes international efforts to move

development forward and assist developing countries to realize the MDGs.

In conclusion, and on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Yemen, I should like to extend our thanks and deep appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless and dedicated efforts in the conduct of the Organization during his two terms of office, working, patiently and diligently, in the service of humanity. I would like to wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Dolatyar (Islamic Republic of Iran): The General Assembly today yet again has heard a number of unsubstantiated and absurd allegations about the Islamic Republic of Iran by the representative of the Israeli regime.

Indeed, it has become a tired practice by the representatives of that regime, which is based on violence, occupation, State terrorism and bloodshed, to misuse every opportunity to raise unfounded allegations against others, in an endeavour to distract the international community's attention from its crimes and State terrorism in the Middle East.

The Israeli regime, ever since its inception and throughout all these years of its aggression, State terrorism and bloodshed, has spared no effort to misinform and mislead the international community by using different mischievous propaganda methods. It is not therefore surprising for the representative of such a regime, ruled constantly by culprits of various crimes against humanity and war crimes, to present such baseless and fabricated propaganda as a remedy for its illegitimacy and as a smokescreen for its war crimes.

In the last six decades, the Israeli regime has continuously and purposely violated many international laws and norms, as well as dozens of United Nations resolutions, to which the response of this illegitimate and irresponsible regime has been nothing but complete defiance.

In that context, particular reference can be made to the mischievous policy of the Israeli regime on the nuclear issue, which is a showcase for its concealment and unabated pursuance of a nuclear arsenal during the past decades. It is indisputable that such an ill-intentioned policy has been threatening the peace and security of the volatile Middle East region for years. In fact, the Israeli nuclear danger and its missile capacity, coupled with its wicked behaviour and intentions, presents a real threat not only to regional peace and security but to the world as a whole. This threat, therefore, needs to be urgently and decisively addressed by the international community.

Indeed, that regime should face a united front and be kept under continuous pressure to relinquish its nuclear programme and to place all its nuclear facilities under international monitoring. It is worth mentioning that the only existing obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is the non-adherence of that regime to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its continued clandestine operation of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, with help and technological assistance from certain States.

That regime has paid no attention to the continuing international calls made in various forums, particularly at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which by name called on that regime to accede to the NPT immediately and without any conditions.

The baseless allegations and statements made in the Assembly tonight by the representative of the Zionist regime demonstrate clearly that those who are putting my country under growing, unreasonable and baseless pressure are in fact trying to serve the interests of the illegitimate Israeli regime. We believe that the international community and world public opinion are well aware of that ploy and therefore will not give in to pressure aimed at protecting the illegal policies and practices of the Zionist regime and its illegitimate interests.

Regarding the recent Israeli aggression against Lebanon, the representative of the Zionist regime lectured us in this Hall that democracy is good and terrorism is bad, but she forgot about occupation. She said, "Terror is terror, even when it is called

resistance". It seems that for the Zionist, occupation is acceptable; the only problem is resistance to occupation. According to Zionist doctrine and practice, any kind of resistance to occupation is bad and forbidden. To Zionists, resistance means extremism; in their view, moderation means pacifism and acceptance of subjugation. I must remind the representative and her supporters that occupation is occupation, war crimes are war crimes, and brutality and aggression are brutality and aggression, regardless of what one calls them.

I also wish to speak in right of reply to another comment. This morning, the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates made some unacceptable claims against the territorial integrity of my country. Because we have clearly and repeatedly placed on record our position on that issue, I do not need to go into detail here. The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to its international obligations, especially those arising from the memorandum of understanding of 1971. We firmly believe that misunderstandings or other interpretations or applications — if any — of the memorandum of understanding should be addressed with goodwill and through mutually agreed mechanisms in order to find an acceptable solution.

For its part, my Government has always welcomed interaction and exchanges of views between officials of Iran and the United Arab Emirates on issues of interest and concern to both countries. We believe that dialogue between our two Governments can play a decisive role in dispelling any existing misunderstanding.

Mr. Al-Hebsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The State of the United Arab Emirates has always been careful to clearly express its firm and principled national position on the three islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Moussa — and to uphold the sovereignty of our country. The presence of Iran on those islands since 1971, which belong to the Emirates, constitutes an illegitimate military occupation that violates the letter and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, the rules of international relations and the provisions of international law. This situation must be corrected.

I reiterate what my country's Minister for Foreign Affairs said earlier today when he invited the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to agree to refer this matter to the International Court of Justice. Once again, I urge Iran to make a serious response to the peaceful initiatives of the Government of the United Arab Emirates so that this issue can be resolved in a peaceful manner, either by participating in peaceful bilateral negotiations or by agreeing to refer the matter to the International Court of Justice and accepting its legal decision.

The meeting rose at 9.50 p.m.